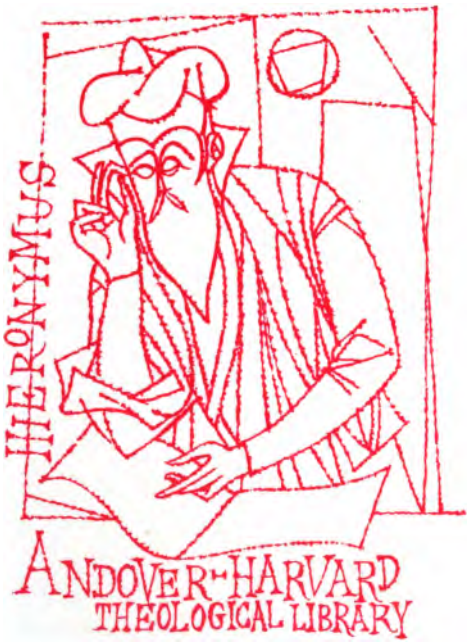
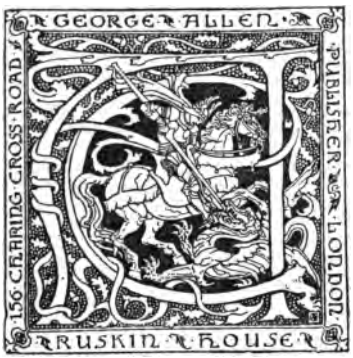


THE "GOOD MAN" OF THE XVIIITH CENTURY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THE "GOOD MAN" OF THE XVIIITH CENTURY

A MONOGRAPH ON XVIIITH CENTURY DIDACTIC LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

THE PLACE OF "THE GOOD MAN" IN XVIIIth CENTURY LITERATURE

I

THE personification of types of character is one of the most marked features of the literature of the XVIIIth century. Alike in England, France, and Germany, these personifications found favour with the literary men of that age, indeed they are of more frequent occurrence in general literature than in books of philosophy. In compositions of the most different kinds, *e.g.* dramatic writings, novels and tales of adventure, educational treatises and books of devotion, recourse is constantly had to the artificial creation of characters for the purpose of illustrating principles.

Now the portrait which most interests us in this collection is that of "the good man." The latter sometimes appears simply as good, sometimes as rather wise, or at

all events as one in whose goodness wisdom is the main ingredient. The favourite English ideal took predominantly the first of these two forms, whilst on the Continent the characteristic bias was towards the second.

This difference between the English and Continental view was partly due to the fact that the typical conception of "the good man" on the Continent was a quasi-revolutionary product, and was associated with the current rationalism, whereas in England this was not so, or was not so to the same extent. Philosophical and theological speculations obviously required an intellectual rather than a simply and purely ethical exponent. But besides this reason for the difference, it must be remembered that the whole tendency of thought in England at that time was towards the representation of the individual in preference to that of the type, and that this influence connects itself with ethical characterisation far more readily than with

intellectual generalisation. The conception of "the good man" arose out of the love of the English for what is concrete, living, and human; that of "the sage" or "wise man" out of the love of abstraction which was everywhere then gaining ground on the Continent.

Yet the generic conception was the same both in England and abroad, and even that difference, the causes of which have been above explained, may easily be exaggerated. For the English mode of representation often approximates to what we have described as the Continental model, and in foreign literatures we meet with similar inconsistencies on the other side. There is in short far more of likeness than there is of difference between these two views. Nor should we have anticipated that this would be otherwise, considering the close resemblance of sentiment and opinion in the two cases. Hence, what we have to do is to show how the same general idea was differently reflected in England and

on the Continent, rather than to insist on an antagonism of two distinct ideas. Above all, it should be remembered that, whilst the points of contact were many and various, the divergence was simply and solely due to the double fact that in England there prevailed a less marked religious alienation on the one hand, and a more realistic literary treatment on the other.

In all cases alike, these personifications were prompted by a desire to make virtue appear simple and to impart to morality a common-sense complexion. The persons portrayed are not as a rule the embodiments of higher ideals with which it is thus sought to familiarise men's minds. So far from anything of this kind are they, that they pointedly disclaim the possession of any superior knowledge, whilst in matters of conduct they are content to walk according to the same rule of life which has been followed by the good in all previous times. Hence the object aimed at was not so

much edification as rather simplification, or more truly, the former by means of the latter. "There is nothing mysterious or incomprehensible in the life of virtue;" such in nearly all these pattern instances is the presupposition either expressed or implied. "The good man" will, somehow or other, find his way out of every difficulty, and bear up under every trial. And he will do this without asceticism, without "enthusiasm," and in some cases, without deriving any assistance from revealed religion.

And as "the good man" was himself one who, whether by his superior penetration, or by his good sense, or by his good heart, had resolved life into its simplest elements, so the surroundings in which he was commonly depicted as flourishing, exhibited, or were intended to exhibit, a similar simplicity. The influence of what Mr. Ruskin calls "the classical view of life" is apparent in both cases, though, as he bids us observe, conceived "in neither the Greek nor the Roman spirit." "The good man" indeed

is not more of an abstraction than is the habitat assigned to him. Nay! he is himself sometimes drawn with so much power that we scarcely think of him as an abstraction until we endeavour to realise him in relation to his surroundings. When, however, we make this endeavour, we usually discover not only that there is no place for the person, but also that there is no person for the place.

In point of fact, the XVIIIth century writers experienced the very greatest difficulty in fitting "the good man" into the scene and circumstances in which his lot was cast. The methods which they adopted were chiefly of the following three kinds. Either verisimilitude must be abandoned altogether, or else the accessories of the tale or drama must be derived from some quarter of the world not much known, and seen only through a haze of romance (Egypt, Abyssinia, Persia, China), or else finally, the sage must be allowed to appear as a spectator rather than as an actor, and

as standing detached from his environment in lofty isolation.

The opinion has already been expressed that "the good man" in his Continental garb was a quasi-revolutionary product. Yet such creations as Lessing's Nathan, and in the main also Rousseau's Vicaire, belong much more to the *Aufklarung* (Illumination) than they do to the Revolution, and in reference to the latter have even a conservative side to them. For according to his true conception, "the good man" of the XVIIIth century was an eclectic epitome of the ethical residue left over even after the assaults of Rationalism had done their worst. As such, he was not the inaugurator of a new epoch, nor the originator of a new gospel. He is rather to be regarded as having incorporated in himself if not the wisdom of the ages, yet at least all that part of it which remained intact in the age of reason.

Another mark by which these creations were distinguished was their almost exclusive

reference to the individual, and their failure to take account of human nature under its *social* aspects. "The good man" sprang into existence ready made, and without any apparent dependence on present influences or past associations. This result was partly necessitated by the then prevalent ignorance of anthropology and ethnology, but was perhaps even more due to an extravagantly abstract view of life shared in common alike by the philosophic and the vulgar.

Ideal representatives of contemporary tendencies are of course the common stock of literary characterisation at all times. In particular, the initiation of great movements of thought or of social life is usually productive of a copious assortment of such phenomena. Thus, there is a certain resemblance between these XVIIIth century ideals and those representations of "the wise man" which found favour with the Greek philosophical schools of the first century after they had been transplanted to Rome. The similarity consists chiefly in

the following two points. In the first place, the ideals in both cases were the outcome of an attempt to exhibit the essentials of religion and morality as independent of the accretions of popular superstition. Secondly, in both cases it was as an individual, rather than in his social and political capacity, that man was regarded.

On the other hand, the difference between these two typical modes of idealisation is fundamental. "In an ascetic severity the aristocratical wise man sought the mental independence which he could no longer find in the institutions under which he had to live. Philosophy in the first century was accepted by the educated class in commutation for political freedom."[1] In this description there is very little to remind us of the ideal of the XVIIIth century, except it be by way of contrast. "The good man" as then conceived (Goldsmith's "Vicar" not excepted), far from being an ascetic, is as often as not an easy-going sort of person

[1] Mark Pattison.

who indulges in self-reflection rather as an outlet for his own moralising propensities than by reason of his sense of the aggravation of life's miseries.

Nor was the "good man's" philosophy accepted by him "in commutation for political freedom." It is of course true that in some countries at that epoch political rights were in a state of relative suspension, and it may also be admitted that during the latter half of the century, the consciousness of this fact made itself felt to some extent, though not to a very great extent, in literature. On the whole, however, in the writings of this period, and especially in writings of the class here referred to, there is not only an almost exceptional remoteness from any such considerations, but there is no sort of reason to suppose that this attitude was adopted as a refuge from the contemplation of the crying evils of the time. Moreover, aristocratic aloofness was not one of the literary characteristics of the XVIIIth century, though the public which literary men

then addressed was no doubt a strictly limited one both as to numbers and ideas.

In the XIXth century, the conception of character has become much more complex, and its personal embodiments in literature much more many-sided. We need only compare typical examples of personification in the two cases, *e.g.* the exact reproduction in Schiller's dramas of such abstractions as Virtue, Freedom, Patriotism, with Browning's abhorrence of any like simple and easy method. Or rather (for the personifying tendency was perhaps after all more due to Schiller's idiosyncrasy than to the times, and indeed, as a literary fashion, belonged not so much to his as to the preceding generation), in order to appreciate the advance which has been made in this respect during the last hundred years, we should have to compare the abstract characterisation of "the French XVIIth century working on the age of Lessing" with the XIXth century conception of character as the concrete manifestation of an organic unity.

Now, by observing the extent of this difference, we may be led to form too depreciatory an estimate of the previous conceptions. Yet European literature would certainly be the poorer if these portraits of ideal excellence were excised from its pages. After all, they represent a real attempt to exhibit the better and loftier side of human nature in an adequate form. The life and thought of those times can in no way be more successfully vindicated from the charge of meanness commonly levelled by critics against the XVIIIth century, than by citing from the classics of that much-abused age, passages in which the glorification of virtue finds expression through the mouth of the ideally "good" or "wise" man. The style in which such passages are written may sometimes give offence by reason of its rounded periods, in other cases by reason of the turgidity due to its Gallic origin, but it at least shows a genuine appreciation of the dignity of its subject.

As for the limits within which in the

XVIIIth century the treatment of this subject was confined, it should be remembered not only that *any* embodiment of virtue must necessarily be limited by the moral and social state of the world at the time being, but also that this necessity is inherent in personal characterisations even more than in the representation of Utopian forms of society. The materials which go to make up "the vision of a city in the clouds," though derived from contemporary facts and associations, may be so poetically woven together as to suggest almost no idea of local or temporal limitations. In the case of an idealised person this is a more difficult achievement, all the more so if the person is exhibited with a view to the direct enforcement of a principle. There is then great danger either of resolving the person into an abstraction, or else, on the other hand, of obtruding the local and temporal elements at the expense of those which are universal.

Hence, besides the fact that these representations of character could not but have

been relative to the age in which they were produced, we require also to bear in mind the further fact that they are representations, the very nature of which is such that the universalising process can only be applied to them with great difficulty.

We have hitherto distinguished two types of the "good man," the one literary, the other philosophical; the one ethical, the other intellectual; the one English, the other foreign. We added that there is much in common between these two conceptions, and that in the representation of the one there is often to be found an admixture of the other. We must now, however, add a few words more to what has been said on this latter point, in order to convey an idea of our sense of its importance. For the right understanding of XVIIIth century thought requires that, whilst distinguishing between English and Continental tendencies, we should yet not consider them wholly apart from each other. This caution ought to be superfluous, but it is unfortunately only

too necessary. Certainly, when English people talk (as they constantly are talking) of the XVIIIth century, what they almost invariably mean is, the state of life and thought in *England* during that century. And often, no doubt, when this limitation is imposed it is strictly in point, the matter referred to being one which has only, or which has chiefly, to do with England.

In many cases, however, there is no such justification. In such cases, the exclusively English connotation attached to the term XVIIIth century is in more than one sense misleading. For not only is the right understanding of particular subjects or questions thus frustrated, but the general character of the period, owing to its being too narrowly outlined, receives an inadequate representation. At all events the literature, and especially the didactic literature, of that age, appears very differently when it is regarded from the more extended point of view. It is then seen to be a literature which is not more massive than it is incisive, not more

stately than it is intellectually nimble. No doubt, there have been plenty of good critics in recent times who have treated XVIIIth century literature thus comprehensively. But the popularisation of some such more enlightened treatment is still a desideratum, and to contribute, however slightly, towards this result, is one chief aim of the extracts and comments contained in the present volume.

Besides, however, that they are thus some English and some foreign, these selections have been chosen (as is indicated by the sub-title of the volume) on account of their more or less avowedly *didactic* character. The author is especially anxious that this qualification should be observed, in order that it may be realised that the discussion on which he is about to enter, so far from being indefinitely general, is in reality strictly limited. Our inquiry is not as to what we may learn by studying the works of XVIIIth century authors, but rather as to what certain of those authors in certain

of their works themselves desired that we should learn from them.

There is happily no lack of matter available for the purposes of this discussion. Whatever may be thought as to the tone of its teaching, there can be no doubt that, taken as a whole, the literature of the XVIIIth century proposed to itself the rôle of a teacher, and that its bias is towards edification rather than towards the pursuit either of abstract truth or of æsthetic charm. In the following pages, however, only those writings are brought under review which are unmistakably thus characterised. Where this aim is only to a comparatively slight extent noticeable, that particular branch of literary production is treated with corresponding brevity. On the other hand, where the didactic aim is more pronounced, the investigation is confined within less narrow limits.

A further restriction arises from the fact that, with one exception (Lessing's "Nathan"), the illustrative specimens are

selected exclusively from *prose* literature. Not only would the inclusion of the poetry of the XVIIIth century have been impossible in a volume of moderate dimensions, but it would have deprived the undertaking of the unity of character which the author believes he is not wrong in ascribing to it in its present form. For the contention here maintained is that throughout the century didactic works in prose, resembling those about to be described, formed a distinct branch of literature, and one which is highly characteristic of the age to which it belongs. No doubt, the didactic side of XVIIIth century poetry is not less (in a sense it is perhaps more) worthy of attention. But though in some respects it would admit of a mode of handling similar to that here adopted, in others it would not do so. More particularly (to mention only one consideration), the poetical compositions of the period could scarcely be appropriately, and certainly they could not be exhaustively, analysed in connection

with the character of an imaginary "good" or "wise" man.

The main object of these studies is an ethical one. Questions of literary criticism, of theology and philosophy, of political and social history, are touched upon only incidentally and with a view to the elucidation of the central thesis. The paramount point to which attention is directed in each case, has reference to the characteristics of the "good man" *quâ* his goodness in each case. On the other hand, the order in which these cases are presented is *for the most part* a chronological one, but is partly also designed to exhibit the development of the English or concrete, into the foreign or abstract, types of goodness.

The XVIIIth century is here understood as ending previously to the French Revolution. Nor has it been thought advisable to treat the state of society and the march of events anterior to the revolutionary epoch as naturally and necessarily leading up to the Revolution as its result.

There has been too much of this *post hoc ergo propter hoc* criticism indulged in by a certain school of writers, indeed by writers of more than one school, in recent times. Doubtless, the French Revolution was not brought about in a day; doubtless, its predisposing conditions were many and various, and the effect ultimately produced was due to causes which had been in operation not only throughout the century, but also long previously. Doubtless, too, the intellectual revolution of the middle part of the century was, to a greater or less extent, responsible for the subsequent political revolution. It is, however, much more difficult than is commonly supposed to assign the effects to their causes, and to prove to demonstration that what happened was just what might have been expected to have happened under the circumstances. In any case, there is no reason for so constantly importing into the consideration of a given period reflections upon its final outcome. This method of procedure, therefore, has been as much as possible avoided.

The uniqueness of these XVIIIth century teachers is to be found in the services rendered by them as popular educators. In this capacity, they acted sometimes as moral reformers, sometimes as expounders and interpreters, sometimes as sworn foes to conventionalism and cant. To the theology and philosophy of their times they stood severally in different relations, but what distinguished them as a class was their manner of adapting the "wisdom of the wise" to popular uses. They were the more easily able to do this inasmuch as the professional teaching of that age was literary rather than technical, and admitted therefore of being made intelligible to wider circles without losing much in the process. And as they were sometimes more highly gifted than were the divines and thinkers to whom they acted as interpreters, so it occasionally happened that they suggested openings, and prepared the way for developments, which the divines and thinkers had failed to perceive. In this way, as

will appear from more than one instance in the following pages, they now and again saw, "as it were afar off," the tendencies of European thought in later times.

There can indeed be no doubt as to the extent of their influence, though the public to whose education they devoted themselves, was, of course, not the community at large, but was confined to the upper and upper middle classes. The latter, in the XVIIIth century, divested itself of its bourgeois associations to an extent unparalleled in its previous, and not hitherto equalled in its subsequent, history.

Since then, the position of a teacher in literature has been affected chiefly by two influences—those, viz., of *democracy* and of *nationality* respectively.

(1) Obviously, the effect of the first influence was, to widen the sphere of the teacher's activity. The public to which writers now address themselves is — or rather tends to become—unlimited. And corresponding with this enlarged sphere of the teacher's activity,

are the enhanced opportunities of men of letters when they appear nowadays in the teacher's garb. Didactic, however, *in the old sense* it is no longer possible for literature to be. Let this not be misunderstood. There is, of course, a place in these days (never more so) for didactic agencies, such *e.g.* as the spoken word in the pulpit and on the platform and in the lecture-room, and the written word in popular books and magazines and in the higher class journals. But as regards literature, *i.e.* literature of a quality commensurate with that of the works presently to be noticed in this monograph, it remains true that, though it may and should have a didactic character, this cannot now be what it was in the XVIIIth century.

The function of a teacher who uses literature as his vehicle in a democracy, would seem to be rather an indirect one; he has to influence those who will influence others. He cannot work on society at large (as the XVIIIth century essayist or letter-writer, could do on his incomparably smaller *entourage*), by face to face presentation. He must

write for the instruction and edification of those who will then take care that what he says is apprehended more widely — that great army of popular educators of whom mention was just now made. And he is under the necessity of doing this not only on account of the vast dimensions of modern society, but also on account of the vastly more abundant stores of knowledge which a teacher, worthy of the name, is now required to assimilate.

If it should seem that this is to dispense with direct experience of life and personal sympathy with the masses, as parts of the teacher's qualification for his office, the answer is, that those conditions are as essential for the exercise of influence through the medium of discipleship as they are for the exercise of direct influence. In either case the object is the same, viz. "the increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

(2) As regards the *second* factor, owing to which the position of public teachers in literature has been recently affected, we must be very brief. Undoubtedly, however,

the European revulsion in favour of national ideals has in this matter, as in so many others, produced a marked effect.

The general trend of opinion (at all events during the *Aufklarung* period, and to some extent previously) was, in the XVIIIth century, not national but cosmopolitan. Much of the humanitarianism of the age was allied with this latter tendency; there was keen delight experienced in the discovery of the prevalence of the same conditions of life all the world over; international rivalries were discountenanced, and war, except for purely defensive purposes, was reprobated. Religion was treated from the same point of view. Natural religion found favour largely on account of its supposed comprehensiveness. A similar feeling found expression not only in didactic literature, but also in literature more generally, as likewise in many of the current conceptions of morality and law.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that in many respects the Nationality Movement of our own times has inclined popular

teachers (not perhaps necessarily, but still as a matter of fact), in an opposite direction.

Possibly, it may be found when this latter movement has run its course, that its operation is not so antagonistic to cosmopolitanism as appearances thus far have sometimes seemed to indicate. It may be that the amiable intellectualism of our predecessors was in *its* way as unsubstantial and unrealisable as the recrudescence of national feeling is in *its* way often partial and one-sided. It will be for posterity to judge. Meantime, there can be nothing more interesting than to study and compare the two views as represented by their best exponents in the two periods respectively.

Notwithstanding their cosmopolitanism, these writers do not appear to have been cheered to any great extent by the prospect of new and better things to come in the ages yet unborn. According to not a few of them, man's happiness had gone from him when he emerged from the state of nature. Or else, it was held that man's hopes of happiness were destined to be

realised only in the world beyond, and after his present life had run its course. Others, whilst more sanguine in their expectations, were yet not any more inclined to anticipate the gradual amelioration of the human lot. Even at its best, and when (as *e.g.* with the English essayists) it was professedly cheerful, the outlook which displayed itself to these writers was not an inspiring one. None the less, their prevailing tone is strong and healthy. They evince no desire to fold the hands and "to sleep before the evening." Their dejection is not to be mistaken for despondency, nor is even their want of hope the same thing as hopelessness.

In short, such literature as is here represented, though it may not have much balm to apply to man's wounds, at least teaches him to act bravely, to endure steadfastly, and to discharge faithfully the duties of his life's calling. Above all, it is perfectly honest, *so* honest that its resolute refusal to accept quack remedies, even when it is

under every temptation to do so, strikes us as not merely pathetic, but also and much more as positively invigorating.

As we look back over the history of the century which has just now ended, it may be well for us to ask ourselves whether, and if so how far, the darkness in which, to the XVIIIth century observer, life seemed to be enveloped, has since lifted? and what reasons there may or may not be from our present ethical and religious point of view for cherishing brighter hopes as regards the future? All, however, that this work attempts to do is to give a clue to the thoughts of the men of that age. The comparison of those thoughts with the ideals of goodness and wisdom now prevalent, has advisedly been left to be undertaken by the reader. Nevertheless, what is here written will not have fully served its purpose, unless it stimulates inquiry in this direction, and facilitates the process of comparing together the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries.

II

ECLECTIC VIRTUE

THE ENGLISH ESSAY

The Spectator (1711–1714)

II

At starting, we are met by the question as to which of the characters in the *Spectator* is to be regarded as *par excellence* that of the "good man." The answer is that, though there are good men enough drawn for us in these essays (including one or two such who stand out above the rest), yet the character of the "good man" is here not so much actually presented as rather suggested. Not that this character can be discovered merely by making a collection of the points of resemblance in respect to *goodness* between the several portraits exhibited. Rather, in order to perceive what the *Spectator* wishes us to understand about the ideally "good man," we must pay attention not less to what it says as regards the defects than to what it says as regards the

merits of those good men whom it describes. For the insistance on these defects is not merely humorous, but serves also a serious purpose, by intimating the nature of the ideal desiderated and of the wants which its satisfaction presupposes as supplied.

In works of fiction, especially in those of the XVIIIth century, personal limitations usually appear as a theme for ridiculous, and sometimes for farcical, representations. In the *Spectator*, on the other hand, their treatment is never of the latter kind, whilst even when it is such as to excite ridicule, this is seldom its sole or even its chief aim. The Essayists do not so much make fun of people as reveal to us that the funny side of human nature is one of its most essential characteristics. Their conception of personal limitations is therefore not of the comical kind, but rather of the suggestive, allusive, and quaintly humorous kind. The defects and excesses of good men (Sir Roger is described as "something of a humorist because his virtues as well as imperfections,

are as it were tinged by a certain extravagance which makes them particularly *his*, and distinguishes them from those of other men") are by them regarded as compensated for partly by these same good men's own recognition of them, partly by the supply in their surroundings of that in which they are themselves lacking. We are by these means enabled, if not actually to complete the picture, yet at all events to understand in what respects the outlines thus roughly sketched require to be filled in.

Hence, the reader is put in possession of the character of the "good man" as he stands portrayed in the *Spectator*, not all at once, but as the result of impressions communicated from many different sides. Nor is the unity of this creation an effect of conscious design, for, not to mention that they were not all written by the same hand, these essays follow each other in no systematic order, except that occasionally some two or three of them are grouped together as bearing on the same subject. None the

less, it is probable that no serial production has ever been more like-minded in all its parts. And it is in regard to the determination of the character of the "good man" that the thread of connection running through the essays is more especially noticeable.

Some idea of this diversified unity of the "good man's" character as unfolded in the *Spectator*, may be gathered from the following extracts, which, however, in order adequately to embody what is in fact the underlying spirit of the whole series of essays, would not admit of being confined within the limits of our present space.

In the first place, then, it is insisted that the "good man's" character must be one throughout, by which what is meant is that its moral and intellectual constituents must be exhibited in harmonious concert, and in due subordination to each other. Reason should govern passion, and under morals should be included not only morality (in the narrow sense) but also manners. "I lay it down therefore as a rule, that the whole man

is to move together; that every action of any importance, is to have a prospect of public good; and that the general tendency of our indifferent actions should be agreeable to the dictates of reason, of religion, of good breeding; without this, a man . . . is hopping instead of walking, he is not in his entire and proper motion. To polish our understandings and neglect our manners is of all things the most inexcusable. I know of no evil under the sun so great as the abuse of the understanding. There is hardly that person to be found, who is not more concerned for the reputation of wit and sense than honesty and virtue. This unhappy affectation of being wise rather than honest, witty than good-natured, is the source of most of the ill habits of life." "The folly of admitting wit and learning as merits in themselves, without considering the application of them."

It follows from this that there must be no one-sidedness. The latter, under whatever form it may appear, always meets with

chastisement; whilst, on the other hand, the famous club to which the Spectator and his friends belong "is very luckily composed of such persons as are engaged in different ways of life, and deputed as it were out of the most conspicuous classes of mankind." Let us then next proceed to give some instances which will serve to illustrate both the rebukes that are here administered to one-sidedness, as also the supply of the deficiencies under which it is shown to labour.

Let our first instance be that of the correction and supplementation of old English country life, and of Sir Roger as its central figure. The charms of such a life are here not more vividly than they are lovingly depicted. Yet is the essayist by no means unaware of the reverse side of the picture. Not only do rural delights not appear to him as a subject for unmixed eulogy, but he sometimes exhibits rather ruthlessly the drawbacks which are involved in their enjoyment. These candid criticisms are, no

doubt, often conceived in a spirit of playful irony, the aim in such cases being to indicate the unappreciativeness of the town-bred point of view from which the Spectator himself writes. A more serious purpose than this, however, is not infrequently apparent, as, for instance, in the strictures upon country life which proceed from Sir Andrew Freeport.

Thus, a country gentleman's "charity to the poor and hospitality amongst his neighbours" may mean only that "so many hogsheads are drunk, and so many peasants are made merry at his charge." Many such gentlemen have "to turn out of their seats to make way for such new masters as have been more exact in their accounts than themselves" . . . "their estates dipped and eating out with usury. They preserve this canker rather than it shall be said they are men of fewer hundreds a year than they have been commonly reputed." Similarly, the character of Will Wimble is introduced as a specimen case, "the case of many a

younger brother of a great family who had rather see their children starve like gentlemen than thrive on a profession or trade beneath their quality." Again, the bitterness and bigotry of party spirit are more aggravated in the country than in the town: "The Knight is a much stronger Tory in the country than in town." Lastly, country people are remarkable for their suspiciousness. "It is indeed high time for me to leave the country, since I find the whole neighbourhood begin to grow very inquisitive after my name and character."

Yet, as a lover of solitude and of contemplation, the Spectator takes great delight in his walks abroad when "the rooks and crows that rest upon the tops of the aged elms seem to be cawing in another region," as a student of old-fashioned ways and patriarchal customs he is "always very well pleased with a country Sunday," on moral and sanitary grounds he sets a high value on the country as giving scope for the enjoyment of bodily exercise, and

especially of field sports, "the preservation of health, and keeping all the organs of the soul in a condition to execute her orders."

Hence it appears, that in each sphere of life we may find the correction of some other. "Business and pleasure, labour and rest, recommend each other; they take their turns with so quick a vicissitude, that neither becomes a habit, or takes possession of the whole man; nor is it possible that he should be surfeited with either."

Our next, and only remaining, illustration as regards this point, is supplied by the *Spectator's* protest against one-sidedness under the form of pedantry.

"A man who has been brought up amongst books, and is able to talk of nothing else, is a very indifferent companion, and what we call a pedant. But methinks we should enlarge the title, and give it to every one that does not know how to think out of his profession and particular way of life."

"Every age a man passes through, and way of life he engages in, has some particular

vice or imperfection naturally cleaving to it which will require his nicest care to avoid."

"The Physician and Divine are often heard to dictate in private companies with the same authority which they exercise over their patients and disciples; while the lawyer is putting cases and raising matter for disputation out of every matter that occurs."

The first great point, then, to be borne in mind is, that the "good man" must be a man, and not a mere section or fragment of a man.

We come now to consider on what basis this diversified unity of the "good man's" character ultimately rests. Whence is its inspiration derived?

Now a complete and well-ordered life such as is here kept in view, suggests at first sight, that its unity is due to an *artistic* motive, or as we ought, perhaps, rather to say (since artistic ideals were not congenial to XVIIIth century thought, which, indeed, was too strictly practical to be thus affected to any great extent), due to

a desire to reduce life to fixed principles of good manners, good taste, good breeding.

Such an interpretation, however, though superficially plausible, is very far from being correct. Nay, rightly considered, it is the Spectator's rejection of this motive-principle, which gives to his conception of the "good man's" character its specifically religious stamp. For there is much, not only in the general view taken in these essays, but also in the view taken in them of religion, which recommends itself to the "faultily faultless" way of thinking referred to, and it is therefore all the more significant that goodness is not here *in the main* idealised, still less impersonated, under this aspect.

We shall do well, on these grounds, to distinguish those cases in which the Essayist regards religion thus merely conventionally, from others in which the view taken extends beyond any such considerations.

The first of these two cases, is perhaps best illustrated in Papers 185 and 201. In those papers (and in many others), we meet

with the familiar XVIIIth century representation of religion as a form of rational piety equally opposed to *enthusiasm* on the one hand (the special reference is to dissent, "most of the sects that fall short of the Church of England have in them strong tinctures of enthusiasm"), and to *superstition* (which finds its best illustration in Romanism, the latter being here described as "one huge overgrown body of childish and idle superstitions"), on the other.

Obviously, then, this mode of conception offers an opportunity for the synthesis alike of religion and of life in accordance with the rules of conventional propriety.

But though these canons of good taste are frequently uppermost in Mr. Spectator's mind, it is not in this direction that we must look for his deepest and most mature conviction. These essays in short are written from a religious, and in some cases from a devotional, point of view. Let us then next examine, and at the same time illustrate, the Essayist's appreciation of religion, regarded

as a regulative principle in the affairs of life.

According to the *Spectator*, the first and most essential thing to be borne in mind is, the indispensable necessity of religion, and the impossibility of constructing a synthesis of experience on any other but a religious basis. The position here maintained is essentially different from that which is typical of the bulk of XVIIIth century literature. According to the generality of writers at that time, the necessity of religion arises chiefly, if not solely, from the fact that it would be a reflection on the Divine justice, if somewhere and somewhen the good man was not rewarded and the bad man was not punished. This doctrine, however, is so far from bringing the whole of life under a religious principle, that it is not applied except in regard to the *ultimate* issue of men's actions: it is not conceived of as being required to enter into the *formation* of character throughout its whole length and breadth, as inviting men to the

contemplation of their mission and destiny, and as necessitating watchfulness, prayer, and self-discipline.

It may, no doubt, be urged that all this only amounts to saying that the *Spectator* is in part a devotional work, whereas the works which are thus brought into comparison with it, are not of this description. Let that be granted. Yet the best of these papers do not cease to be literature when they treat of sacred subjects, not even when they treat of the most sacred of all subjects, as *e.g.* in Steele's "Good Friday Meditations" (No. 356). Usually, however, in such cases they preserve their literary character, because they do not concern themselves with the *arcana* of religious devotion, but enlarge either on the presuppositions from which Christianity starts, *e.g.* the nothingness, transitoriness, vanity, of human life considered under its purely temporal aspect, or else, on some strictly practical thesis, *e.g.* the efficacy and helpfulness of the Christian religion, both

as a principle of guidance and as a source of hope.

The need for religion and for its application to the affairs of life, may be thus briefly illustrated.

Religion is indispensable because "a man cannot be perfect in his scheme of morality who does not strengthen and support it with that of the Christian faith."

Undoubtedly in this statement is contained the most characteristic expression of the *Spectator's* own belief in the necessity of religion. It indeed appears frequently—and that not least of all in the paper (No. 459) from which the above statement is extracted (the pre-eminence of morality over faith being there vindicated on six several grounds)—that the function of religion, according to the Essayist, consists first and foremost in the satisfaction of man's moral needs. Nay, it is more than once argued, that the moral effects of Christianity would remain even if its theology were disproved, *e.g.* "It is impossible for those who have

ears to hear and eyes to see . . . not to be convinced by the received articles of the Christian Religion." . . . "But were it possible for anything in the Christian faith to be erroneous, I can find no ill consequences in adhering to it. The great points of the Incarnation and sufferings of our Saviour produce naturally such habits of virtue in the mind of man that, I say, supposing it were possible for us to be mistaken in them, . . . no other system of religion could so effectually contribute to the heightening of morality."

Such being the function of religion in reference to morality, there are three ways in which it may be discharged.[1]

First by "explaining and carrying to greater heights several points of morality."

This is explained in another paper (No. 213) to mean, that actions which are morally indifferent (*i.e.* neither right nor wrong) may be utilised by religion for higher

[1] *i.e.* as stated in Paper 459, which very correctly epitomises the *Spectator's* views on the whole question.

purposes. "If instead of prescribing to ourselves indifferent actions as duties, we apply a good intention to all our most indifferent actions, we make our very existence one continued act of obedience, we turn our diversions and amusements to our eternal advantage, and are pleasing Him (Whom we are made to please) in all the circumstances and occurrences of life." . . . "This *holy officiousness*" . . . is recommended in that "uncommon precept," "whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do." The language here used shows that what the Essayist has in view is essentially a religious, or rather a Christian, enlargement of the sphere of morality.

"Secondly, by furnishing new and stronger motives to enforce the practice of morality."

An instance of this may be found in No. 257, the last of three consecutive papers on "Fame." In that paper, after reasoning against the pursuit of fame on strictly moral and practical grounds, the Essayist remembers that what he has so far said is

"self-evident to those who are versed in speculations of morality," for which cause he "proceeds to a point of the same nature which may open to us a more uncommon field of speculation," understanding under this last head that "it is the greatest folly to seek the praise or approbation of any being besides the Supreme; and that for these two reasons, because no other being can make a right judgment of us, and because we can procure no considerable benefit or advantage from the esteem of any other being." These two propositions are in what follows both most amply and most beautifully expounded. All that concerns us here, however, is that in this instance we have not merely an *extension* and consequent heightening of morality by means of *religion* (as in the first case), but also "a new and stronger motive applied to the enforcement of morality."

"Thirdly, by giving us more amiable ideas of the Supreme Being, more endearing notions of one another, and a true state

of ourselves both in regard to the grandeur and vileness of our natures."

To illustrate these points severally, would carry us too far. In the following passages, however, we may find indications of the Essayist's meaning.

(*a*) "There is still another method which is more persuasive than any of the former, and that is an habitual adoration of the Supreme Being, as well in constant acts of mental worship as in outward forms. The devout man does not only believe, but feels there is a Deity; he has actual sensations of Him. His experience concurs with his reason; he sees Him more and more in all his intercourse with Him, and even in this life almost loses his faith in conviction. . . . Faith and devotion naturally grow in the mind of every reasonable man, who sees the impressions of Divine power and wisdom in every object on which he casts his eye."

(*b*) "Every particular faculty is capable of being employed on a very great variety of objects . . . the understanding, for example,

the memory likewise. . . . The happiness of a soul will be adequate to its nature. . . . The happiness is to be the happiness of the whole man. . . . The whole soul is happy in the pleasure which arises from any of its particular acts. . . . Seeing, then, that the soul has many different faculties, . . . and . . . considering that the happiness of another world is to be the happiness of the whole man, . . . who can doubt that there is an infinite variety in those pleasures we are speaking of; and that this fulness of joy will be made up of all these pleasures which the nature of the soul is capable of receiving? . . . Revelation very much confirms this notion under the different views which it gives us of our future happiness. In the description of the throne of God it represents to us all those objects which are able to gratify the senses and imagination, . . . the raptures of devotion, of Divine love, the pleasure of conversing with our Blessed Saviour, with an innumerable host of angels, and with the spirits of just men

made perfect, . . . hierarchies or governments, . . . a variety of joys, . . . a gratification of the soul in its different faculties."

(*c*) "If I may be allowed to mention a more serious expedient for the alleviating of absence, I shall take notice of one which I have known two persons practise, who joined religion to that elegance of sentiments with which the passion of love generally inspires its votaries. This was at the return of such an hour, to offer up a certain prayer for each other which they had agreed upon before their parting. The husband . . . has often told me that he could not have supported an absence of three years without this expedient."

From all of which instances it appears, that the *Spectator's* religion is intended to touch life at every point and to provide at once a stimulus and a satisfaction to the soul's various promptings. So far from any masterpiece of art being capable of being arrived at as the result of our handling of experience, we are here informed that

we live in this world in a state of probation, that "now we" do indeed "see through a glass darkly," and that in short the whole of what meets the eye during the course of our journey through this world, sinks into insignificance in comparison with the illimitable background of possibilities which await their fulfilment in a world beyond.

Of course, in all this there is nothing new. The old moralities are taken for granted, the old religion is taken for granted, and then it is shown how these two classes of subject-matter stand related to each other. But before we find fault with the Essayists on account of their apparent commonplaceness in this respect, let us try and understand what it implies. We may explain it as due to "that old-world sentiment based on the feelings of hope and awe which may be described as the religion of men of letters (as Sir Thomas Browne has his 'Religion of the Physician') —religion as understood by the soberer men of letters in the last century, Addison,

Gray, and Johnson; by Jane Austen and Thackeray later. A highway of feeling developed largely by constant intercourse with the great things of literature, and extended in its turn to those matters greater still, this religion lives, in the main retrospectively, in a system of received sentiments and beliefs; received like those great things of literature and art in the first instance, on the authority of a long tradition, in the course of which they have linked themselves in a thousand complex ways to the conditions of human life, and no more questioned now than the "feeling one keeps by one of the greatness—say of Shakspere."[1]

But Addison's religion was perhaps inspired as much by his love of what is concrete as by his love of what is ancient. As in other cases his thought upon life appears as only one degree removed from life itself, and indeed as accompanying the actual experience of life in the form of a

[1] Walter Pater's "Appreciations," p. 123.

running commentary, so when he expresses himself on religious subjects, he seldom expatiates in the world of ideas without recurring at intervals to some specific observance of customary religion. Abstract speculation on sacred things was not at all to his taste. Rather in dealing with religion, as in dealing with everything else, his reflection is distilled from his experience with such faithfulness that it retains the flavour of its original, whilst it reproduces its original in the form of a thought-picture.

Naturally, under these circumstances, the result is apparent, and to some extent actual, commonplaceness. Still, we should have to understand this term[1] in a very different sense from that in which it is usually understood, before it could with justice be applied to the Essayists' religious teaching.

[1] It was this quality that Matthew Arnold imputed to Addison more generally. To much the same effect, we find R. L. Stevenson saying: "By the way, I have tried to read the *Spectator*, which they all say I imitate, and—it's very wrong of me, I know—but I can't. It's all very fine, you know, and all that, but it's vapid" (Letters, vol. i. p. 161).

But to proceed.

Though the relation subsisting between morality and religion, as here conceived, recognises the Christian revelation *as* a revelation and therefore as breaking new ground, almost as much friendliness is exhibited by the Essayists as by the free-thinkers contemporary with them towards non-Christian religions, and especially towards the religions of classical antiquity. Addison's own explanation of his conduct in this matter (which was, however, probably as much due to the spirit of the age as to his own design) is as follows:—"When I employ myself upon a paper of morality, I generally consider how I may recommend the particular virtue which I treat of by the precepts or examples of the ancient heathens; by that means if possible to shame those who have greater advantages of knowing their duty, and therefore greater obligations to perform it, into a better course of life; besides that many among us are unreasonably

disposed to give a more fair hearing to a Pagan philosopher, than to a Christian writer."

One further point remains to be noticed.

Notwithstanding the seriousness of the *Spectator's* religious position, its outcome is decidedly optimistic. This is so at all events in a practical, if not in a philosophical, sense. Nothing pleases the Essayist more than to dilate on religion as predisposing to cheerfulness, nor are there any persons whom he more dislikes than those who "abstain from all appearances of mirth and pleasantry . . . who, by a natural uncheerfulness of heart, mistaken notions of piety, or weakness of understanding . . . give up themselves a prey to grief and melancholy."

"The true spirit of religion cheers as well as composes the soul; it banishes indeed all levity of behaviour, all vicious and dissolute mirth, but in exchange fills the mind with a perpetual serenity, uninterrupted cheerfulness and an habitual

inclination to please others, as well as to be pleased in itself."

It may perhaps be thought that in thus attempting to exhibit and to estimate the *Spectator's* views of life and of the world, the particular subject of the present inquiry has been too much left out of account. That subject is "the good man." Very possibly it may appear, that though these essays contain several distinct character-sketches, there is no such single portrait recognisable in them as that which upon our theory is required, and if so, it may be objected that we have been criticising the character of the essays and not that of any "good man" therein represented.

Yet probably no one who is at all familiar with the Essayists will be inclined to doubt, that their whole work has for its result (however little this may have been intended), to impress upon us the several aspects under which life presents itself to a supposed "good man." It is this personal element, *e.g.*, which colours the essays on their more discursive

and argumentative side. The subjects chosen in such cases, are seldom if ever discussed from an abstract point of view; their treatment is interesting to us chiefly as indicating the spirit or temper in which a good man would regard them. Considered as contributions to the solution of the questions raised, Mr. Spectator's reasonings on the great problems and mysteries of life, death, and immortality, are for the most part ineffective and, but for the personal point of view intervening, would very little repay our attention. Nor would these dissertations be redeemed even by the extreme purity and elegance of their diction, if they were not the outcome of a recognisably characteristic and self-consistent state of mind, admirable *per se* rather than on account of its alleged justifications. In the lighter essays, on the other hand, what strikes us is not so much the homogeneousness of the *Spectator's* point of view, as rather its ready power of adaptation to individual instances. Yet even here, the

real critic of manners and fashions is after all the "good man," and the criticisms themselves derive no small part of their point and piquancy from this consideration.

But though the *Spectator's* "good man" is thus throughout implied, there is also a sense in which it must be allowed that these Essayists do not believe in the "good man" at all. For this latter idealisation, as understood by some of the "heathen philosophers" (*i.e.* "a chimerical wise man, exempt from passion and pain, and pronounced all-sufficient"), we are told (No. 634), "when divested of the glare of human philosophy that surrounds it, signifies no more than that a good and wise man should so arm himself with patience, as not to yield tamely to the violence of passion and pain; that he should learn so to suppress and contract his desires as to have few wants; and that he should cherish so many virtues in his soul, as to have a perpetual source of pleasure in himself." And he adds, that the much more practicable

requirement of the Christian religion is, "that after having framed the best idea we are able of the Divine nature, it should be our next care to conform ourselves to it as far as our imperfections will admit."

In these essays indeed it is very strongly insisted, that "man's essential perfection is but very little." "There is none who in strictness can be called a virtuous man. Every one has in him a natural alloy, though one may be fuller of dross than another . . . the most perfect man has vices enough to draw down punishments on his head, and to justify Providence in regard to any miseries that may befall him." The turn which this gives to the reflections of the wise man (*i.e.* wise in the *Spectator's* sense) is to the effect that he is "humbled by the sense of his own infirmities," and that he "considers what he wants, whilst the fool considers what he abounds in."

Two other points are noticeable in the "good man's" character as thus interpreted. One is, that not only will he be purified

and disciplined through suffering, but also his manner of meeting his sufferings will be a much more vital element in his goodness than his manner of shining in himself, or of outshining others, by his actions. "A gentleman where I happened to be last night, fell into a discourse which I thought showed a good discerning in him; he took notice that whenever men have looked into their heart for the idea of true excellency in human nature, they have found it to consist in suffering after a right manner and with a good grace . . . in our condition we have no conception of superlative excellence, or heroism, but as it is surrounded with a shade of distress." It appears to the Essayist that even on the stage "the instruction and moral are much finer where a man, who is virtuous in the main of his character, falls into distress . . . than when he is represented as happy and triumphant. Such an example corrects the insolence of human nature, softens the mind of the beholder with sentiments of pity and

compassion, comforts him under his own private afflictions, and teaches him not to judge of men's virtues by their successes."

The second distinguishing feature is that though "where opportunities and inclinations are given to the same person, we sometimes see sublime instances of virtue which so dazzle our imaginations that we look with scorn on all which in lower scenes of life we may ourselves be able to practise," yet that "this is a vicious way of thinking, and it bears some spice of romantic madness, for a man to imagine that he must grow ambitious, or seek adventures, to be able to do great actions. It is in every man's power in the world, who is above mere poverty, not only to do things worthy but heroic. . . . Men of public spirit differ rather in their circumstances than their virtue; and the man who does all he can in a low station, is more a hero than he who does not do any worthy action he is able to accomplish in a great one."

These several positions, though often

supported by instances derived from Greek and Latin literature, are in the main based on the teaching of Christianity, and usually appear in a context appropriate to them under that aspect. The "good man" of the *Spectator* is in fact penetrated through and through by Christian associations, and it is, as thus understood, that he is to be regarded as supplying to these essays their distinctive inspiration. In virtue of this fact, the *Spectator* serves to conduct the reader from the secular to the sacred literature of the period, its natural supplement, for our present purpose, being the more strictly devotional treatment of the "good man's" character by XVIIIth century writers. To this latter we shall shortly proceed. Previous, however, to doing so, we shall have to consider another and very different class of literary production, which also is usually regarded as having grown out of the English essay, and that is the English novel.

III

THE "GOOD MAN" HUMAN

THE ENGLISH NOVEL (FIELDING)

"PARSON ADAMS" IN *Joseph Andrews*. Published in 1740

III

"THE rise of the great schools of English novelists—with Richardson and Fielding at their head—was rendered possible by the essayists and party writers of the reign of Anne, by Addison and Steele, by Swift and Defoe."[1] "The leaflets composing the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* are written from the standpoint of a great novelist, and abound in material which might have been wrought into a great novel."[2]

These remarks are in the spirit of a similar one made by Macaulay to the effect that "if Addison had written a novel on an extensive plan, it would have been superior to any that we possess."

And probably the opinion thus expressed is a sound one, though it would be well not

[1] Raleigh, "The English Novel," p. 109. [2] *Ibid.*

to be too absolute on the subject, having regard to the essential difference between the essay and the novel, and to the fact that in our own days good essayists have not always realised the expectations formed of them as novelists.

There can, however, be no doubt as to the likeness between the English essay and the English novel of the XVIIIth century in so far as regards such considerations as that they both "accepted the dictatorship of fact and adopted the language of common life;" also, that they both of them proceeded from men who, in marked contrast to their predecessors, "loved the individual better than the type;" and finally, that both of them are conspicuous for their humour.

In passing from the essay to the novel, it might appear that, as we are concerned only with the more didactic characters of XVIIIth century literature, so we should necessarily have recourse to Richardson for the representative "good man" or good men of this chapter. For it may be said of

the Richardsonian novel not less than of the essay (though in a different sense), that it exhibits a direct tendency to edification: indeed one of Richardson's works has been described as "a delightful nursery of virtue," whilst he himself was declared by Dr. Johnson "to have taught the passions to move at the command of virtue."

But though Richardson is didactic enough, he is not *human* enough for our present purpose, which is (as our chapter heading indicates) to find the "good man" portrayed as a human being. It is solely from this latter point of view that the English novel will now be discussed. We shall confine ourselves to the concrete or human side of this school of fiction, which is, however, by far its most important side.

In order to succeed in this object, we must turn to that writer whose spirit has never been better delineated than in the following terms: "No enchanted light of old romance . . . no tender regret for past forms of society or passionate aspirations for

the future . . . insight into the motives of contemporaries; a power of seeing things as they are; sympathy with homely virtues; contempt for shams and hypocrites . . . the strong healthy common-sense and stubborn honesty of the sound English nature."[1]

Now the special reference of this appreciation is to Fielding. Fielding's representative character, indeed, is now generally admitted. It is emphasised in the concluding words of the chapter from which the above passage is extracted: "A complete criticism of the English artistic literature of the XVIIIth century would place Fielding as the centre, and measure the completeness of other representatives pretty much as they recede from or approach to his work. Others, as Addison and Goldsmith, may show finer qualities of workmanship and more delicate sentiment; but Fielding more than any one gives the essential—the very form and pressure of the time."

[1] Leslie Stephen, "English Thought in the XVIIIth Century," vol. ii. p. 380.

As then Fielding is admittedly thus representative, we will proceed to consider the "good man's" character as reflected in Fielding's novels.

But before entering on this attempt, we would remark on the significance of the mere fact, that there is a place found for "the good man," and even for the idealised "good man," in literature of this description. For that literature, as we all know, "was more careful to keep its heroes human than to keep them heroic," whereas, in representations of "the good man" there could not but be an exhibition of heroism, or at all events of exceptional virtue. It seems to us that the hold which the conception of this ideal obtained in the XVIIIth century, is in no way more strikingly illustrated than by the fact in question, from which it appears, that even writers the least inclined to idealism were none the less constrained to a certain extent to idealise good men.

At all events, in the literature which was

"most careful to keep its heroes human," these "good men" occasionally make their appearance. They do so sometimes inconsistently, *i.e.* they are not in keeping with the *prosai-comi-epos* (Fielding's own self-applied term) in which they take part. Sometimes, however, this character is exhibited as at once frankly human and yet as none the less heroic, or rather, as a combination of heroism and saintliness.

The first of these two alternatives finds its best illustration in the Squire Allworthy of Fielding's "Tom Jones." Of this character Mr. Austin Dobson has truly remarked, that he "remains always a little stiff and cold in comparison with the 'veined humanity' around him. We feel of him as of another impeccable personage that we cannot breathe in that fine air, that pure serenity of perfect light. . . . Allworthy is a type rather than a character."

Perhaps, however, it would be nearer the mark to say that Allworthy's character is unsatisfactory, not so much because it

is thus shadowy, as because it is a blend of what is in part substance with what is almost if not altogether shadow. In other words, the two parts which he sustains, that of an immaculate and imperturbable philosopher, and that of a most estimable but somewhat spiritless country gentleman, do not cohere. They may not be necessarily inconsistent, but they are so as here presented. In his local character, Allworthy is a "good man" of the upright, benevolent, amiable, and gullible type, of that type, in short, which, in XVIIIth century literature, was such an especial favourite. England had not yet become, though (as has been shown in Seeley's "Expansion of England") she was then in process of becoming, "the commercial State" *par excellence*. Hence an irreducible minimum of "cuteness" in the affairs of life, was not yet regarded as a condition in the absence of which goodness is apt to degenerate into flabbiness. Moreover, for literary purposes, a foil is well known to

be invaluable. Admirable play can be made (as Thackeray and Dickens afterwards found under like circumstances) by contrasting the guilelessness of an Allworthy with the duplicity of the hypocrites and knaves by whom he is surrounded. Thus considered, Allworthy, though not a very strongly drawn character, is a fairly successful one, and it is therefore, as thus considered, that we have spoken of this character as not altogether wanting in *substance.*

But Allworthy is also an XVIIIth century philosopher, or at all events, a moralist. This side of the Squire's character, however, has inconsistencies peculiar to itself, in virtue of which it appears, not merely in relation to the other side, but also intrinsically, as mere shadow. Thus, it is clear that by associating both Thwackum and Square with Allworthy (the one representing conventional orthodoxy, the other Deism), Fielding intended to represent his ideal sage as susceptible in

part to both these influences, a fact which, besides being implied generally, is in one passage expressly indicated."[1]

On the other hand, Allworthy occasionally comes before us as a devout Christian, and even, in an ironical sense, as a quasi-mystic. It is on this account that the author makes a playful apology to the reader on his behalf, as when he says on his opening page, "This loss" (that of his wife *i.e.*) "he bore like a man of sense and constancy, though, it must be confessed, he would often talk a little whimsically on this head: for he sometimes said he looked on himself as still married, and considered his wife as only gone a little before him, a journey which he should most certainly sooner or later,

[1] Square (in reference to the smallness, as he considers it, of his own legacy from the apparently moribund Allworthy): "I know to what it is owing; it proceeds from those narrow principles which you" (*i.e.* Thwackum) "have been so long endeavouring to infuse into him, in contempt of everything which is great and noble." . . . "I wish," cries Thwackum, in a rage, "I wish for the sake of his own soul your damnable doctrines have not perverted his faith. . . ."

take after her, and that he had not the least doubt of meeting her again in a place where he should never part with her more —sentiments for which his sense was arraigned by one part of his neighbours, his religion by a second, and his sincerity by a third."

Of course, if Allworthy's character had been more vividly outlined, there might have been a resulting unity, notwithstanding that he is thus inconsistently presented. As it is, his chief value, regarded from the ethical and speculative point of view, consists in the fact that he is the embodiment of distinct and contrasted tendencies which, however, in the XVIIIth century often coexisted.

Needless to say, the allusion above made to another and more felicitous rendering of the "good man's" character *à la* Fielding, was intended to refer to Parson Adams.

Now in the XVIIIth century, there was a preconceived model to which the literary

treatment of clergymen and things clerical was more or less expected to conform.

The parson must at all events appear as an object of ridicule, he must be easily imposed upon, must have but a scanty pittance on which to depend, must cringe to his patron or else suffer for not doing so, must be either an ignoramus, or else, if learned, a mere pedant.

These conventional attributes of the clerical life are many of them exhibited by Adams in a semi-burlesque form, so much so indeed that his experiences not infrequently remind us of the rough-and-tumble adventures of Mr. Pickwick.

On the strength of this fact it may be urged that, inasmuch as he is a laughing-stock and does not command respect, Adams cannot be a really good man. Nor are we concerned to claim for one who so constantly serves as a butt, the character of a moral exemplar. It should be remembered, however, in the first place, that virtue (or, at least, *didactic* virtue) could not have

been conceived, much less have been represented, by a writer of Fielding's stamp on any other terms. The sublime, if it exists at all in the world, must necessarily be ridiculous. That, from Fielding's point of view, is an axiom which there is no disputing.

But there is a second and much more important thing to be borne in mind, and that is, the complete identification of the humour of this character with its pathos. Adams is indeed a masterpiece not only of literary invention but also of ethical insight, nor is there any other example of the *merses profundo pulchrior evenit* kind, which is at once so strikingly original and so exquisitely touching. The "Vicar of Wakefield" is a prose idyll, the charm of which lies in its mingled simplicity and sweetness. On Adams' own ground, however (and the Vicar when he appears as aimlessly wandering about towards the close of the story, somewhat resembles him), Goldsmith's creation is of vastly

inferior workmanship. For neither is the contact with experience in the latter case at all comparable with the many-sided picture presented in the former, nor does the camaraderie of Adams, his friendship with all mankind, find more than a pale reflection in the similar characteristics of Dr. Primrose.

A firm and sincere believer himself, Adams' "own opinion hath yet always been that a virtuous and good Turk, or Heathen, are more acceptable in the sight of their Creator than a vicious and wicked Christian, though his faith was as perfectly orthodox as St. Paul's himself." Correctness of belief is indeed much less his object than purity of life. At the same time, he is no veiled rationalist, nor even a Tillotsonian Churchman impressed with the desirability of satisfying the scruples of rationalism. Adams, in fact, goes as far in the way of belief as it was possible in the XVIIIth century for a man to be represented as going by any but a purely devotional writer, such

e.g. as William Law. Yet, the importance which he attaches to the practical side of Christianity, no doubt, to a large extent determines his view of its other sides. Thus, with regard to the life here, the foremost position is occupied by the "doctrine of good works"; with regard to the life hereafter, by the "doctrine of future rewards and punishments." The former tenet is brought into strong relief not only in the passage above quoted, but constantly throughout the whole work. It is sufficient here to quote the Parson's criticism (which is independently of great interest) on the preaching of Whitfield:—

"When he began to call nonsense and enthusiasm to his aid, and set up the detestable doctrine of faith against good works, I was his friend no longer; for surely that doctrine was coined in hell, and one would think none but the devil himself could have the confidence to preach it. For can anything be more derogatory to the honour of God, than for men to imagine that the

all-wise Being will hereafter say to the good and virtuous, 'Notwithstanding the purity of thy life, notwithstanding that constant rule of virtue and goodness in which you walked upon earth, still as thou didst not believe everything in the true orthodox manner, thy want of faith shall condemn thee?' Or on the other side, can any doctrine have a more pernicious influence on society than a persuasion, that it will be a good plea for the villain at the last day: 'Lord, it is true, I never obeyed one of Thy commands, yet punish me not, for I believe them all?'"

Of scarcely less importance than the doctrine of good works in Adams' view, is the doctrine of future retribution. This likewise appears from many passages, of which the following is perhaps as good a specimen as can be found:—

"'Why,' says Adams very gravely, 'do you not believe in another world?' To which the host answered, 'Yes, he was no atheist.' 'And you believe you have

an immortal soul?' cries Adams. He answered, 'God forbid he should not.' 'And heaven and hell?' said the Parson. The host then bid him not to profane, for those were things not to be mentioned nor thought of but in church. Adams asked him, why he went to church if what he learned there had no influence on his conduct in life? 'I go to church,' answered the host, 'to say my prayers and behave godly.' 'And dost not thou,' cried Adams, 'believe what thou hearest at church?' 'Most part of it, master,' returned the host. 'And dost not thou then tremble,' cried Adams, 'at the thought of eternal punishment?' 'As for that, master,' said he, 'I never once thought about it. But what signifies talking about matters so far off? The mug is out, shall I draw another?'"

Passing from the sphere of belief to that of conduct, what strikes us in Adams is, on the one hand, his freedom from restraint, his disregard of clerical propriety, his love

of social, and especially of convivial, intercourse—in short, his enjoyment of life; on the other hand, and not less, the strictness of many of his views, the unworldliness of his disposition, the loftiness of his aims.

Adams' easy, *débonnaire* nature, as evidenced by his pipes and ale, is probably his best known characteristic, and stands therefore in no need of illustration. On the other hand, attention is sometimes diverted from the fact that the Parson's view of life was in its essentials not only simple, but also, within certain limits, strict. Of this the following quotations may serve to remind us:—

On the duty of resignation and submission.—"You are too much inclined to passion, child, and have set your affections so absolutely on this young woman, that if God required her at your hands, I fear you would reluctantly part with her. Now, believe me, no Christian ought to set his heart on any person or thing in this world, but that, whenever it shall be required or taken

from him in any manner by Divine Providence, he may be agreeable, peaceably, quietly, and contentedly, to resign it." And be it remarked, that though this somewhat over-wrought sentiment is immediately afterwards toned down by the announcement of Adams' own utter collapse on his being made acquainted that his youngest son was drowned, yet that the comfort administered to the Parson on this occasion by his faithful Joseph, is said to have been largely derived from the Parson's own discourses both in private and public, "for he was a great enemy to the passions, and preached nothing more than the conquest of them by reason and grace."

On the luxury of the Established Church. —"I do not by the flourishing estate of the Church understand the palaces, equipages, dress, furniture, rich dainties, and vast fortunes of her ministers. Surely those things, which savour so strongly of this world, become not the servants of One who professed His kingdom was not of this world."

On serving God rather than man.—"Madam," answered Adams, "I know not what your ladyship means by the terms master and service. I am in the service of a Master who will never discard me for doing my duty . . . whilst my conscience is pure, I shall never fear what man can do unto me."

Theatrical performances.—"There is nothing but heathenism to be learned from plays. . . . I never heard of any plays fit for a Christian to read, but 'Cato' and 'The Conscious Lovers.'"

With regard to Adams' views more generally, we may remark that, like those of Fielding's contemporaries, and still more like those of his immediate successors, they incline strongly to a belief in the superior innocence and happiness of a life lived "far from the madding crowd." The spectacle of the private and domestic bliss enjoyed by Mr. Wilson (that blasé man of the world who has exhausted all the possibilities of experience which town life has to offer), provokes

Adams to the remark that "this was the manner in which the people had lived in the golden age." The same preference appears when (speaking of Wilson) Adams says, "Believe me, child, all that gentleman's misfortune arose from his being educated at a public school," a thesis which he then proceeds to defend on the ground that, "if great schools are little societies where a boy of any observation may see in epitome what he will afterwards find in the world at large" (as is objected to him by Andrews), *Hinc illæ lachrimæ*, for that very reason. I prefer a private school, where boys may be kept in innocence and ignorance, for according to that fine passage in the play of 'Cato,' the only English tragedy I have ever read,

> 'If knowledge of the world must make men villains,
> May Juba ever live in ignorance.'"

. . . . . .

The function discharged by these character-sketches is not merely that of envisaging certain phenomena in a lifelike shape (for

which indeed the drama is better suited than the novel), but also that of throwing light on the nature of men's moral ideals. The net result of Fielding's contributions to our knowledge in this direction, so far as concerns our present subject, appears to be as follows :—

The "good man" is neither of the ancient, nor of the mediæval, nor of any of the modern, types of perfection. Though not particularly squeamish as regards other people, he does not himself swerve from the path of virtue, which latter, however, he pursues spontaneously and without effort. Yet though in these respects the "good man" appears as a child of nature, he is not thereby saved, as it might be supposed that he would be (for true naturalness is or ought to be the best of all safeguards against any such result), from making himself ridiculous. Nor is he gifted with insight enough to detect, nor with strength enough to correct, evil in his surroundings.

In some cases he is liable to make

great mistakes in his judgments, and is seldom, if ever, sufficiently on the look-out for charlatanry and imposture. From the many awkward dilemmas in which he comes to be placed owing to this cause, he must escape as he best can, nor in ordinary cases must he expect to be exempted from the inconveniences thus occasioned. Where, however, he is brought face to face with graver dangers and his ruin or disgrace appears inevitable, he usually comes off victorious. In his contemplation of human life, he is more moved by men's miseries than by any other consideration affecting them. His pity and sympathy on these grounds form in themselves attributes of his goodness, without his being thus to any great extent prompted either to the investigation of preventable calamities or to reflections on men's adversities as due to their own fault.

In seeming contrast to the "good man's" tenderness, yet in reality as its other side, is his scorn. The chief exciting cause of

this latter, is the spectacle of hypocrisy, meanness, dissimulation. On the other hand, the weaknesses of human nature seldom meet with chastisement at his hands. Nor, though absolutely fearless, is he much given to rebuking men's sins of pride. He may no doubt do this where cruelty and oppression are in question; but he does not make war on pride of power and position, nor on wickedness in high places. It is indeed important to remember that our author's "good man" flourished previous to the French Revolution and went out of the world (Fielding himself died in 1754) two years before William Godwin came into it.

Finally, at those times when the "good man" is seen at his best, the inwardness of his disposition is unmistakably due to the influence of Christianity. Occasionally, we may discern a first-hand and original impression received from Christ Himself, indeed the character of Parson Adams cannot but have been due largely to inspiration from this source. But though the pattern of the

"good man's" life is in great measure modelled on these lines, he has no sense for Christianity as a *view of the Universe*, whilst even as regards the life of man, he values it chiefly in relation to the moral conduct of the *individual*, *i.e.* as a persuasive to virtue and as a deterrent from vice. It is an inaccurate mode of statement, however, to say that Fielding's "good man" is insensible to all doctrinal influences, since these latter are at all events to some extent involved in the above-mentioned considerations. Nor is this same "good man" either consciously or otherwise a Deist, though in some cases, as in that of Allworthy, he may not regard leanings in this latter direction with any marked abhorrence.

IV

PERSONAL HOLINESS

"A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE"

By William Law. Published in 1729

IV

As the *Spectator* is in the first place a literary, and only secondarily a religious, work; so in Law's "Serious Call" this order is inverted. In the latter work, however, the subordination was of course intended to be incomparably more thoroughgoing. For not merely is the "Serious Call" a book of religious devotion, but it eschews everything which is not serviceable to this end. We may even say that this volume is not more remarkable for its soul-stirring appeal than it is for its close adherence to its subject.

Such being the case, it may not unreasonably be required that the "Serious Call" should be discussed by us exclusively from its author's own point of view.

Now if in what follows, we do not

altogether comply with this demand, this will not be because we do not in great measure recognise its justice, but because there is at any rate one feature of this book in regard to which it seems to us that there is an excuse for our not doing so. In so speaking, what we refer to is, Law's character-sketches. The latter, though by their author designed to conduce, not less than any other part of his work, to the advancement of religion, yet suggest reflections which are not only religious but also literary and ethical. These sketches are indeed many of them very similar to some of those drawn for us in the *Spectator*, similar *i.e.* not to the recurrent portraits of the members of the club, but to the more fugitive of such creations, *e.g.* the characters of Cinna and Gloriana in Paper 206, Polycarpus in 280, Emilia and Honoria in 302, and Sombrius in 494. In the last-named case, the likeness to one of Law's impersonations is almost startling.

Law is described by Gibbon (whose father had been at one time his pupil, and whose aunt was his life-long friend) as "the most agreeable religious writer of his day." This encomium may no doubt have had partly in view Law's general style of writing, which is the most apt that could have been chosen for his own particular object, besides being of great merit independently. And perhaps it is as well that this fact should be stated, in order that it may not seem to be implied by our previous remarks that, because in the case before us the writer's aim was not a literary one, he was therefore wanting in literary qualifications. But probably what the historian saw to admire in Law's writings was not only his style, but also his employment of fictitious characters for purposes of illustration. At all events, it is in virtue of our author's skill and success in this department, that Gibbon's language will seem to a modern reader to be more appropriately applied to him than on any other ground.

What then was Law's conception of an ideally good man?

The ideal in this case is, of course, a much more determinately Christian one than was that of the essayists. That the latter could not dispense with the Christian view is no doubt true, just as this is also true, though in a less marked degree, of the novelists. But the essayists were not theologians, nor was it any part of their aim to interpret the loose and vague notions of popular orthodoxy in a more exact sense. They cared for Christianity chiefly because life appeared to them to have a much enhanced value if it was set in a Christian framework. The Christian religion was to them a great addition, an ornament (the word is their own), an envisagement of the totality of existence under a sublime aspect, as well as a support to the "good man's" hopes, of which he stands sorely in need.

Law, however, (the point does not need labouring) was a much more definitely

religious writer. We are not on this account to be understood as praising him at the expense of the essayists. The ideals were different, and it is only in order to indicate that fact that they are here contrasted.

Now the two views which run more or less through all Law's writing (the first predominating in his earlier, the second in his later productions) may be distinguished respectively as hortative and mystical. But matters of doctrine are not in either case, nor in a writer thus characterised should we have expected that they would have been, very prominently brought forward. Hence, though no one would for a moment suppose that Law was indifferent to such matters, the precise nature and extent of their influence on his teaching—alike practical and mystical —may easily escape notice.

It therefore becomes important to know, in what this more definitely Christian view consists. And this seems to be all the more required in Law's case, because his position is in some respects different, not only from

that of the typical XVIIIth century man of letters, but also from that of the typical XVIIIth century dogmatist.

The central principle of Law's theology and the manner of its application to the life of the Christian, are perhaps nowhere better or more clearly stated than in the seventeenth chapter of the "Serious Call." The passage must necessarily here be abbreviated, but in order to arrive at a full understanding of its meaning, the reader is recommended to study it in its entirety.

"The Christian's great conquest over the world, is all contained in the mystery of Christ on the Cross. . . . The state of Christianity implieth nothing else but absolute conformity to that spirit which Christ showed in the mysterious sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross. Every man therefore is only so far a Christian as he partakes of this spirit of Christ . . . To have a true idea of Christianity, we must not consider our blessed Lord as suffering, in our stead, but as our representative, acting in our name,

and with such particular merit, as to make our joining with Him acceptable unto God . . . we are to suffer, to be crucified, to die, and rise with Christ; or else, His crucifixion, death, and resurrection will profit us nothing. The necessity of this conformity to all that Christ did, and suffered upon our account, is very plain from the whole tenor of Scripture.

"*First*—as to His sufferings, this is the only condition of our being saved by them, 'If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.'"

"*Secondly*—as to His crucifixion, 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him,' &c. (Rom. vi. 6). Here, you see, Christ is not crucified in our stead; but unless our old man be really crucified with Him, the Cross of Christ will profit us nothing."

"*Thirdly*—as to the death of Christ the condition is this: 'If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.' If therefore Christ be dead alone, if we are

not dead with Him, we are as sure from this Scripture, that we shall not live with Him."

"*Lastly*—as to the resurrection of Christ, the Scripture showeth us how we are to partake of the benefit of it: 'If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God' (Col. iii. 1). . . . All true believers conforming to the sufferings, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ, live no longer after the spirit and temper of this world, but their life is hid with Christ in God."

"This is the state of separation from the world to which all orders of Christians are called."

These words, inasmuch as they embody the sum and substance of Law's whole teaching, may also be otherwise regarded as representing his ideal of aspiration and endeavour. His "good man," however variously portrayed in other respects, is always the same in so far as that he always

aims at satisfying the above-mentioned requirements.

This ideal enters into the character-sketches of the "Serious Call" both positively and negatively, being in the former case the object which the characters depicted are represented as keeping in view; in the latter, that which they are represented as disregarding, or more commonly, as professing to regard without doing so. As, however, the author's main concern is the illustration of unreality and indifference, he occupies himself chiefly with typical instances which bear out this description. On the other hand, the *good* men and *good* women to whom we are introduced in this book, not only make their appearance much less frequently, but are also much less carefully studied. Law's most felicitous renderings of character are those in which he employs himself as a religious satirist. As so often happens in writings of this class, examples of "eminent Christians" leave an impression of decided tameness when

compared with examples of frivolity, worldliness, and self-indulgence.

Nor, if we were obliged to confine ourselves to Law's more favourable specimens of character, would the material thus supplied be sufficient to put us in full possession of the "good man's" character as it is here represented. In point of fact, the construction of this portrait is facilitated almost as much indirectly by Law's negative instances as it is directly by his positive ones, and we shall therefore, in what follows, make use of the former as well as of the latter.

Having now explained the doctrinal presupposition of Law's ideal, and having called attention to the necessity of consulting his negative not less than his positive character-sketches, we shall next endeavour to fill in the portrait upon which we are engaged by the addition to it of certain characteristic touches without which it would not be complete.

And first, as regards the so-called mysticism which enters more or less into all the

best of the characters which are here described.

This is usually regarded as an unhealthy product of Law's later development. And no doubt it is true that as his life advanced, certain continental influences (of which the chief was that of Jacob Behmen) obtained such an ascendency over him, that his thought became less clear, his style less simple, and that he not infrequently laid himself open to the charge of obscurantism. Yet if by mysticism what is meant is, an immediate apprehension of divine truth as opposed to a conviction arrived at by processes of reasoning, it cannot be questioned that Law was throughout, and not less in his earlier than in his later stages, of a mystical turn of mind. The only difference was that his mysticism was at first kept within due bounds, whilst afterwards it was allowed, to a certain extent, to run wild.

This essential characteristic of Law's temper and tone of mind is what distinguishes, and indeed what chiefly distinguishes,

his method of treatment from that of his contemporaries. Except when it is thus inspired, the motives to which the "Serious Call" appeals are of the customarily prudential kind. Not that even if the mystical element were eliminated from it, this book would be wanting, as prudential theology so often is, in pietistic fervour; not perhaps that in that case, it would be any the less solemn, serious, and telling. At the same time if Law's mysticism were taken away from him, his method of treatment would not differ radically from that which was then commonly in vogue. And indeed there are many passages in Law's works, and especially in his "Serious Call," which admit of a verification of this statement being made, by the simple process of asking ourselves what would be the nature of the remainder after the removal in question had been effected.

A further point to be noticed with regard to this same habit of mind in William

Law's case (as in that of most other persons mystically disposed), is the manner in which it affects his view of devotional religion and of devotional exercises. Joy, rapture, happiness, ecstasy, these are but faint and inadequate terms by which to express Law's sense of the attitude of the devout man "who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety, by doing everything in the name of God and under such rules as are conformable to His glory.[1] Hence, there will be nothing irksome in the devotions of "the good man." The practice of offering up prayer at each of the canonical hours (which, however, in this treatise are never so called), "is not pressed upon any sort of people, as absolutely necessary, but recommended to all people as the best, the happiest, and most

[1] It should always be remembered to Law's credit that he does not restrict the province of devotion merely to devotional observances. "Devotion," he says, "is neither private nor public prayer; but prayers, whether private or public, are particular parts or instances of devotion. Devotion signifies a life given or devoted to God" ("Serious Call," *ad initium*).

perfect way of life. If you are of a devout spirit, you will rejoice at these returns of prayer, which keep your soul in an holy enjoyment of God; which change your passions into divine love, and fill your heart with stronger joys and consolations than you can possibly meet with in anything else." There are indeed few books of this kind in which piety is so much appreciated for its own sake, few in which the imposition of artificial restraints is so conspicuously absent, and in which the devout man is so consistently represented as finding in his devotions the true secret of happiness.

So far then it appears both that the motive of Law's religion is mystical, and that this motive is the source of his devotional rapture. Yet, as has been already observed, mysticism, at all events in the "Serious Call," is kept within due bounds. There is here none of the unhealthy self-absorption, the indifference to practical affairs, the vagueness and unreality,

to which this disposition is so commonly prone. We may even notice traces of Law's more sober side prevailing over his more impressionable side. This comes out more particularly in his view of the relation between the religion of ordinary men and that of persons more advanced. Clearly Law's *inclination* was, to insist on the distinction of two modes of apprehension, two ways of life, "two orders or ranks of Christians." Thus, all men may be "made wise" by "reflections on the vanity of a worldly life," whereas "to meditate upon the perfection of the divine attributes, to contemplate the glories of Heaven, to consider the joys of saints and angels . . . these are the meditations of souls advanced in piety, and not so suited to every capacity."[1] Again, "ever since the beginning of Christianity, there hath been two orders or ranks of people amongst good Christians—the one that feared and served God in the common offices of a

[1] Chap. XII. *ad finem.*

secular worldly life; the other, renouncing the common business and common enjoyments of life, as riches, marriage, honours, and pleasures, devoted themselves to voluntary poverty, virginity, devotion, and retirement, that by this means," &c.

Such is the common language of the mystic and religious recluse at every epoch in history. Yet, on the whole, Law does not indulge his inclination in this direction. At all events, in the "Serious Call" there is nothing on which he insists more strongly than on the proposition, that "a great and exemplary devotion is as much the greatest happiness and perfection of a merchant, a soldier, or a man of quality, as it is the greatest happiness and perfection of the most retired contemplative life."[1]

What saved Law from the temptation to which he was thus exposed appears to have been, in the first place, his view that the Spirit of Christ (the possession of

[1] See Chap. XX., the larger part of which is taken up with the support of this thesis.

which by the Christian is, as we have seen, the sole object of his concern) requires not merely to be received into the heart passively, but also to be studied and cultivated actively—*i.e.* not only through emotional channels, but also ethically and intellectually. There is nothing finer in Law's character-sketches than that touch in the portrait of Classicus, who "does not think that he has done enough when he has only learnt languages; but that he must be daily conversant with the best authors, read them again and again, catch their spirit by living with them," &c., and of whom, after he has been thus described, it is remarked, "How wise might Classicus have been, and how much good might he have done in the world, if he had but thought as justly of devotion as he does of learning?"[1] A man who holds, as Law held, that "the spirit of devotion, like any other sense or understanding, is only to be improved by study, care, application,

[1] See Chap. XIV. *in loco.*

and the use of such means and helps, as are necessary to make a man a proficient in any art or science,"[1] such an one cannot fail to be preserved from any undue reliance on his own feelings and from the self-delusions of mysticism falsely so-called.

Another counteractive operating in the same direction, may be traced to Law's conviction that "we are to use outward helps as well as inward meditation, in order to beget and fix habits of piety in our hearts. . . . For because religion is justly placed in the heart, some have pursued that notion so far as to renounce vocal prayer, and other acts of worship, and have resolved all religion in a quietism, or mystic intercourses with God in silence."

But perhaps what most of all diverted Law from indulging in these excesses of mystical self-absorption, was his sense of "the necessity and benefit of intercession, considered as an exercise of universal love." It is indeed scarcely possible to imagine a

[1] See Chap. XIV. *in loco.*

more universalising influence than that which Law brings to bear upon himself when he considers, and asks us to consider, "how all orders of men are to pray and intercede with God for one another, and how naturally such intercession amends and reforms the hearts of those that use it." Such one-sided mysticism as that of which we are now speaking, is very unlikely to obtain an ascendency over a man who is thus disposed, though it may even then, as in the case before us, not be altogether extinguished.

We see then that a "good man," who reproduced the ideal of goodness aimed at in this treatise, would be a religious mystic, though in no objectionable sense. We see also that this mysticism would not be a merely general affection, but would have strict reference to the first principle of the "good man's" faith and to the application of that principle in his own life and conduct (*i.e.* Christ's death and resurrection accompanied by a corresponding death and resurrection on the part of the Christian).

The next point to be noticed, because the next most necessary to the personal realisation of his religious ideal, is Law's enforcement of the practice of *humility*. The goodness of the "good man," inasmuch as it is rooted in the doctrine of the Cross, will naturally consist very largely in the cultivation of this virtue. Here, again, it is important to observe that what Law has in view is, not conformity with any merely general requirement, but with a definitely Christian one, and in fact with one which is part and parcel of his own apprehension of Christ crucified.

It must be confessed, however, that our author's conception of humility, as thus understood, is in some ways disappointing. The line taken is unexceptionable in itself, but it might have been expected that even from his own point of view Law would have made a more comprehensive study. Humility is here chiefly recommended on the ground that the absence of it involves the grossest and gravest of all inconsistencies

in a Christian believer. That a Christian, *i.e.* one who accepts the truth that Christ "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," that a Christian should not follow the example of his Master in this respect, this is a form of unreality than which there is none more culpable and none more common.

In its exposure and condemnation of this besetting sin, the "Serious Call" cannot fail to enlist the sympathy of all Christian readers, we may perhaps say, of all readers. Nevertheless, it can scarcely be questioned, that there is a tendency displayed in this work to lay excessive stress on one particular kind of humility, and to deplore too exclusively the neglect of that one kind. Law, in fact, was over-inclined to identify humility with asceticism, and pride with luxury and ostentation. There is no doubt an inconsistency — and in some cases a very glaring one — between true Christian humility and "the great, the honourable, the desirable things to which the spirit of

the world turns the eyes of all people," viz. : "to abound in wealth, to have fine houses and rich clothes, to be attended with splendour and equipage, to be beautiful in our persons, to have titles of dignity, to be above our fellow-creatures, to command the bows and obeisance of other people, to be looked on with admiration, to overcome our enemies with power, to subdue all that oppose us, to set ourselves in as much splendour as we can, to live highly and magnificently, to eat and drink and delight ourselves in the most costly manner." And there is as little doubt that by the avoidance of these aims, and by the cultivation of a simpler manner of life, we are trampling under foot our pride, *i.e.* if these are *really* the things on which our pride feeds itself.

But after all, the constant and over and over again repeated insistance on the necessity of our sacrificing our pride precisely under this form, and on the value of the practice of humility precisely as thus understood, all this does not bring us very far

towards appreciating the deep-seated nature and the many-sided forms either of pride or of humility.

At the same time, we must remember that we are now dealing not with a book of ethics, but with a book of religious devotion. There have no doubt been some religious writers, especially such as have taken their stand on the doctrine of the Cross (*e.g.* the author of "The Imitation"), who have had a sort of natural gift for laying bare that *pride of self* which Law never quite succeeds in unmasking, and for the elevation of humility into a Christian virtue of the loftiest and purest type. But such writers must as a rule attack men's sins of pride rather with reference to particular instances in which these find expression, and must extol the practice of humility under circumstances familiar to mankind in general. For all that the "Serious Call" has at times a strong flavour of "The Imitation," it is a book not of the cloister and of the Middle Ages, but of the open places of the world

and of the XVIIIth century. Hence, we cannot be surprised that Law should not have exhibited in this matter the same fine sense which was exhibited by certain of his predecessors, and which was exhibited even by one who was not such a great way from being his contemporary—but who lived under essentially different conditions—viz. the saintly Archbishop of Cambray.

Yet it must not be supposed that what Law has to impart on this subject is of no value. Let us then select a few instances, not indeed of the rebukes which are here administered to pride, but of some of the chief characteristics which will distinguish the "good man" in his endeavours after humility.

"As all virtue is founded in truth, so humility is founded in a true and just sense of our weakness, misery, and sin."

"God has given no one the power of knowing the true greatness of any sins but his own; and therefore the greatest sinner that every one knows is himself. . . . A

serious and frequent reflection upon these things will mightily tend to humble us in our own eyes."

"Reckon yourself only so far humble, as you impose every instance of humility on yourself, and never call for it in other people."[1]

(Paternus addressing his son)—"Never do anything in order to excel other people, but in order to please God, and because it is His will, that you should do everything in the best manner that you can."

"There is but one man in the world with whom you are to be in perpetual contention, and be always striving to exceed him, and that is yourself."

"The greatest trial of humility, is an humble behaviour towards our equals in age, estate, and condition of life."

(Eusebia addressing her daughters)—"A serious earnest application to God for the whole spirit of humility . . . that you may

[1] *Cf.* the admirably drawn character of Cæcus—preceding this remark—Chap. XVI. *in loco.*

always appear poor and little, and mean in your own eyes, and be fully content that others should have the same opinion of you.

"That the whole course of your life, your expense, your house, your dress, your manner of eating, drinking, conversing and doing everything may be so many continual proofs of the true, unfeigned humility of your heart.

"That you may look for nothing; claim nothing, resent nothing . . . neither seeking vain applause, nor resenting neglects, or affronts, but doing and receiving everything in the meek and lowly spirit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

(From the character of Ouranios)—"At his first coming to this little village . . . he thought his parish was too full of poor and mean people, that were none of them fit for the conversation of a gentleman. This put him upon a close application to his studies. He kept much at home, writ notes upon Homer and Plautus, and some-

times thought it hard to be called to pray by any poor body, when he was just in the midst of one of Homer's battles. . . . But now he can not only converse with, but gladly attend and wait upon, the poorest kind of people. He is now daily watching over the weak and the infirm, humbling himself to perverse, rude, ignorant people wherever he can find them, and is so far from desiring to be considered as a gentleman, that he desires to be used as the servant of all."

When from the consideration of humility we pass to that of the more active virtues, and ask ourselves how the "good man" of Law's conception would comport himself in the practical affairs of life, it at once appears that the information supplied on this subject is exceedingly scanty. Not that there is much fault to be found with Law on this account. It is not fair to expect that a devotional writer should discuss questions of morality except as regards matters which lend themselves obviously to

treatment from a devotional point of view. It is no doubt true that the whole sphere of morality admits of being considered, and was by Law in fact considered, as falling within the domain of religious devotion. But we must be satisfied if this truth is insisted on as a general axiom, without requiring that it should be amplified in detail.

Whilst, however, conceding to Law the reasonableness of his self-limitation in this respect, we cannot but sometimes feel provoked that he should not have thrown more light on certain questions which even from his own point of view he might, at all events in passing, have discussed. For example, what is the use of secular knowledge? At a later time, Law would no doubt have depreciated its value.[1] In the "Serious Call," on the other hand, what he does is

[1] How far Law would have gone in this direction at a later time, is not so easily determined as by some writers has been assumed. His opinion, no doubt, tended to become more depreciatory. But of any real and serious *contempt* for knowledge the present writer has not been able to find much trace in Law's works.

to show just enough appreciation on this subject to make us wish that he should show more. Take *e.g.* the following (from the address of Paternus to his son): "I teach you these languages" (*i.e.* Latin and Greek) "that at proper times you may look into the history of past ages, and learn the methods of God's providence over the world. That reading the writings of the ancient sages, you may see how wisdom and virtue have been the praise of great men of all ages, and fortify your mind by their wise sayings." It is the same in regard to many matters of practical concern. Law often makes us see that he is not indifferent to these latter, without, however, enabling us to discover in what precise light he regarded them.[1]

[1] Law's general principle as regards such matters is to the effect that "Piety requires us to renounce no ways of life where we can act reasonably and offer what we do to the glory of God. . . . Whatever you can do, or enjoy, as in the presence of God, as His servant, as His rational creature that has received reason and knowledge from Him: all that you can perform conformably to a rational nature, and the will of God, all this is allowed by the laws of piety" (Chap. XI.).

Yet, on the whole, we must be content if Law only occupies himself with the purpose which he had most nearly at heart. Now, there is just one practical matter which he does not consider to be foreign to this purpose, but rather to be essentially involved in its pursuit. No review of the "good man's" character as conceived by Law, would be complete, if it omitted to notice that department of duty which is concerned with active benevolence, almsgiving, works of charity, and philanthropy.

On this subject Law's own statements speak very much for themselves, and it will therefore be sufficient merely to furnish extracts from them. It will be noticed that in this matter, as in all others, the line taken by Law is strictly derivative from his starting-point, and can only be understood by being considered in connection with the benefits of Christ's redemption. The essence of his whole argument, in fact, consists in a perverted application of

the words, "Freely ye have received, freely give."

"If there be nothing so glorious as doing good, if there is nothing that makes us so like God, then nothing can be so glorious in the use of money as to use it all in works of love and goodness, making ourselves friends, fathers, benefactors, to all our fellow-creatures, imitating the Divine love," &c.

"He that is not ready to give to every brother, that wants to have something given him, does not give like a disciple of Christ."

(From the character of Miranda)—"To relate her charity would be to relate the history of every day for twenty years; for so long has all her fortune been spent that way. She has set up near twenty poor tradesmen . . . educated several poor children . . . as soon as any labourer is confined at home with sickness, she sends him till he recovers, twice the value of his wages . . . If there is any poor man or woman,

that is more than ordinary wicked and reprobate, Miranda has her eye upon them, she watches their time of need and adversity; and if she can discover that they are in any great straits or affliction, she gives them speedy relief . . . There is nothing in the character of Miranda more to be admired than this temper. For this tenderness of affection towards the most abandoned sinners, is the highest instance of a divine and godlike soul. She has a great tenderness to old people that are past their work . . . never treats beggars with disregard or aversion. 'It may be,' says Miranda, 'that I may often give to those that do not deserve it, or that will make an ill use of my alms. But what then? Is not this the very method of the divine goodness? Does not God make His sun to rise on the evil and on the good? Besides, where has Scripture made merit the rule or assurance of charity? Do I beg of God to deal with me, not according to my merit but according to His own great goodness

. . . shall I use a measure towards my brother, which I pray God never to use towards me?'"

With regard to the point last mentioned, viz. that no consideration of "merit" is to be "the rule or measure of charity," the present writer's attention has been called by a friend to the strangeness of the coincidence of this doctrine with the conclusions arrived at, on very different and purely secular grounds, in our own days, by that school of rational philanthropists which is most intent on regulating the distribution of public charity according to scientific principles.[1]

Enough, it is hoped, has now been said to indicate the essential features of "the character of the 'good man' devotionally considered, as illustrated by William Law. That that character is in many ways conceived in a spirit of reaction against

[1] *i.e.* a system of poor-law relief, having in view simply and solely the provision of the necessaries of life to persons who (whether by their own fault or otherwise) are completely destitute.

XVIIIth century tendencies, cannot be denied. It is, however, not less true, that Law's view is also in many ways a representative phenomenon, in the sense that there is much in common between him and his contemporaries, and that the soil from which he and they sprang is as clearly evidenced in his case as it was in theirs. This element in common between Law and his contemporaries is especially noticeable as regards a certain primary axiom of his and their philosophy of religion.

For after all, a "good man" of Law's way of thinking would conceive of religion —alike natural and revealed—pre-eminently as serving a rational purpose, and the fact that it serves this purpose would appear to him—in the true spirit of XVIIIth century theology—as constituting the strongest of all possible arguments in its support. On this point, Law agrees fundamentally with Butler, the only difference between them having reference not

to the importance and cogency of this apologetic argument, but to the application made of it in the two cases respectively. In the view of both of them, the natural light of conscience, together with the superadded light of the Gospel, enable —and can alone enable—man to obtain the *rational* guidance of which he stands in need. Merely, Butler's aim is to show that religion is *credible* because it is thus rational, whereas Law (writing with a strictly practical object in view) contends that, inasmuch as religion does but direct us in the path of reason, the demands which it makes and the restraints which it imposes, ought not to be regarded as superfluous and therefore as irksome.

Thus, whilst Butler says that "Christ published anew the law of nature which men had corrupted; and the very knowledge of which, to some degree, was lost among them," and again that "In this darkness, or this light of nature, call it which you please, revelation comes in . . . supposes the world

to be in a state of ruin,"[1] &c., Law writes, "Man is placed in a world full of variety of things; his ignorance makes him use many of them as absurdly as the man that puts dust in his eyes, to relieve his thirst, or puts on chains to relieve pain. Religion therefore here comes in to his relief, and gives him strict rules of using everything that is about him; that by so using them suitably to his own nature and the nature of the things, he may have always the benefit of receiving a right benefit from them."[2]

As however has been already remarked, it is not so much with a view to demonstrating the credibility, as rather with a view to enforcing the "strict rules," of religion, that Law thus argues. And indeed he uses almost exchangeably, and combines in one sentence, "So far as you reduce your desires to *such things as nature and reason require;* so far as you regulate

[1] "Analogy," Part II. Chap. V.
[2] Chap. XI.

all the motions of your heart *by the strict rules of religion.*"

The presupposition then of Law's "Philosophy of Religion" (apart from his own practical application of it), was strictly in accordance with the view taken by many other theologians at that time.

Nor would it be fair to ignore the advantage which Law obtained from his participation in this view. Had he not held that even "the strict rules of religion" are intended to subserve a rational end, these might have been regarded by him as mere mechanical exercises rather than as spiritual helps. It is all very well to say that Law's mysticism would have saved him from this result, but the genuine mystic is not by any means always the person who finds the observance of religious forms most congenial to his spiritual life; sometimes the inner consciousness of such an one is in Heaven, whilst the obligations imposed on his outward behaviour are discharged slavishly and unintelligently.

The words "natural" and "rational" were no doubt often in the XVIIIth century used as mere catch-words, but when, as in the case of a man like Law, these words stood for realities, the effect made itself felt not only in the theological but also in the devotional sphere. No doubt, Law contributed to his environment much that was original as well as much that was highly beneficial, but there is all the less reason on this account for refusing to recognise his position of indebtedness.

The following appears to be the most concise description of a "good man's" general characteristics which the "Serious Call" contains. It shall be our last extract.

"He is to believe that it is the effect of God's great wisdom and goodness, that the world itself was formed at such a particular time, and in such a manner. That the general order of nature, the whole frame of things, is contrived and formed in the best manner. He is to believe that God's providence over States and

Kingdoms, times and seasons, is all for the best. That the revolutions of State, and changes of Empire, the rise and fall of monarchies, persecutions, wars, famines and plagues, are all permitted, and conducted by God's providence, to the general good of man in this state of trial. A good man is to believe all this, with the same fulness of assent as he believes that God is in every place, though he neither sees nor can comprehend the manner of his presence. This is a noble magnificence of thought, a true religious greatness of mind, to be thus affected with God's general providence, admiring and magnifying his wisdom in all things; never murmuring at the course of the world, or the state of things, but looking upon all around, at heaven and earth, as a pleased spectator; and adoring that invisible hand which gives laws to all motions, and over-rules all events to ends suitable to the highest wisdom and goodness."[1]

[1] Chap. XXII.

V

ANTI-CANT

"CANDIDE"

By Voltaire. Published in 1759

"RASSELAS"

By Samuel Johnson. Published in 1759

V

THAT acute sense of the miseries of human life which is undoubtedly one chief note of the literature of the XVIIIth century, is sometimes regarded as characteristic of this whole period; sometimes, on the other hand, as due to a reaction of men's minds during the middle and later portions of the century against standards of life and thought which had won acceptance during its earlier decades.

These two views are both true as far as they go, though that perhaps is not very far. Nor are they in reality so much contrasted as from the statement of them may appear. Certainly, there are traces of pessimism in the literature of the first part of the century (*e.g.* in Swift's "Gulliver" and in Gay's "Beggar's Opera" and

its sequel "Polly"), but as certainly, pessimism was not then a dominant, or even a conspicuous, feature in literature. The gloomy view prevailed in part throughout the whole period, but the century grew less well-satisfied with itself as it advanced, and the expression of its disgust, from the year 1759 onwards, became increasingly pronounced.

The explanation of XVIIIth century pessimism by reference to the contemporary state of civilisation, is tempting but fallacious. That there was an abundance of human misery at that time may, of course, be shown without difficulty. The facts are only too naked and glaring. But when we go beyond this and represent that the sadness which on the whole characterises the literature of the XVIIIth century implies an *exceptional* aggravation of the wretchedness of the world as its antecedent cause, we tread on uncertain ground. The truth is, we have no test by which to decide whether the amount of misery

prevalent at any given time, is or is not exceptional. Moreover, the import of such terms as happiness and misery is too subjective and fluctuating to admit of our drawing comparisons between the centuries in respect to this consideration.

It is safer to start by assuming the existence of a vast amount of human misery at all times, and then to inquire, how and why, at some times rather than at others, the literary treatment of this fact is a pessimistic treatment?

Now what leads to the pessimistic view in literature, is not merely the sense of the ills to which flesh is heir, but the coincidence of this sense with the felt absence of any accompanying ideals, in the contemplation of which these ills may be conceived of as subordinate to a yet greater good. The literature of all ages treats very largely of man's woes, but happily, in most cases, what has to be endured is looked at in the light of the objects for the sake of which it is alone endurable,

such *e.g.* as religion, love, patriotism, duty. On the other hand, an abnormal state of dejection necessarily sets in where (as in the XVIIIth century) the consciousness of suffering is unaccompanied—either wholly or to a great extent—by a spirit of devotion to ideals.

Then, again, as during this epoch there were no great ideals to raise man aloft, so neither were there any great non-human interests to divert his attention from his own concerns. Physical Science no doubt exercised its attractions, more especially in England;[1] but there has never been a century in which human nature and human happiness have monopolised more attention.

Even foreign countries were often described solely with reference to the somewhat narrow question, as to whether their inhabitants were more, or less, *happy* than those of the countries with which the author and his readers were familiar. Nor when

[1] Lecky, "History of England during the XVIIIth Century," vol. vi. p. 164.

writers expressed their preference for manners and customs of primitive simplicity, and for a life removed from the busy haunts of men, did this mean that the happiness which they desired was that of entering into intercourse with nature rather than with man. On the contrary, the insipidity of the ideal they then presented, shows perhaps more clearly than anything else, how incapable its votaries were of conceiving of happiness otherwise than as regards the connection of human beings with each other in a state of society like that of their own times.

But when man's thoughts are thus almost if not altogether confined to his own circumstances, the darker side of the picture must necessarily predominate over its brighter side. The mystery of human suffering then assumes a quite appalling significance. For the gruesomeness of the thought of man's misery cannot then be mitigated by being taken in connection with any supplemental considerations. There can then be no idea, for instance, of a

redemptive office served by pain in the case not only of man, but also of all other created beings, "the *whole* creation groaning and travailing in pain . . . waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body." And, again, there can then be no idea of an evolution of happiness by a process of selection, and as a result of the survival of the fittest.

It is not of course here suggested that the mystery of human suffering disappears by being regarded in the light either of the religious, or of the scientific, doctrines adumbrated in the above remarks. Still, there can be no doubt that the habit of conceiving of man not merely as self-centred, but as having a place in the world, offers loopholes to the imagination, even if it does not lead to a satisfactory solution; nor can it any more be doubted, that the vogue of these wider views acts as a counteractive to pessimism. Or rather, what we ought to say is, that it acts as a counteractive to *such* pessimism as that which obtained currency in

the XVIIIth century. For we do not for a moment contend that this latter ever sounded the depths of misery as *profoundly* as they have sometimes been sounded in times subsequent. The men of the XIXth century have both believed more and despaired more than the men of the XVIIIth century. And what causes the difference between ourselves and our predecessors is in both cases the same thing, viz. our less limited outlook and our less exclusively literary apprehension.

But this restriction, if it narrowed the horizon, and by so doing intensified the melancholy, of the XVIIIth century philanthropist, made itself not less felt as a bond of sympathy between the literary man and mankind at large. The literature of the XVIIIth century was indeed never more in earnest than it was in its expression of the deep-seated pity thus aroused. It is this feature which alone justifies us in regarding "Candide" as an outcome of the feelings of a "good man." The savagery of

the incidents related in that work, its scorn and raillery, its misanthropic sentiments, these all proceed straight from the heart of one whose sense of the magnitude of human sufferings amounted to a life-long agony.[1]

The almost simultaneous appearance of "Candide" and of "Rasselas," together with the striking similarity between the two works, has always been regarded, and will always remain, as a most noteworthy literary phenomenon. On this point, Boswell writes: "Voltaire's 'Candide,' written to refute the system of Optimism, which it has accomplished with brilliant success, is wonderfully similar in its plan and conduct to Johnson's 'Rasselas,' insomuch that I have heard Johnson say, that if they had not been published so closely the one after the other that there was not time for imitation, it would have been in vain to deny that the scheme of that which came latest was taken from the other."

[1] In the year 1713, *i.e.* forty-six years before the publication of "Candide," Voltaire had written an ode, *Sur les Malheurs du Temps* (Henry Morley).

"Rasselas" is a noble composition. It is pervaded by the same consciousness of life's miseries which distinguishes "Candide," though its spirit is grave and reflective rather than bitter and incisive. Both works contain remarks applicable to the conduct of life quite apart from any general questions as regards the possibility of happiness. In this respect, however, as might be supposed, "Rasselas" is the more noticeable. The argument in both cases leads to the same conclusion, but it is only in Johnson's case that we can apply those words of a then lately deceased poet (Dyer)—

> "There is a kindly mood of melancholy
> That wings the soul, and points her to the skies."

Deep seriousness indeed rather than despair of life is the impression most likely to be left on the mind by the perusal of "Rasselas." Boswell tells us that this more hopeful tone is due to the fact that his master's creation was intended, "by showing the unsatisfactory nature of things temporal, to direct the

hopes of man to things eternal." And there can be no doubt that the Princess' conclusion at the end of the book, is to this effect, and does express its author's main purpose in writing it. But even had this not been so, it may be conjectured that Johnson's love of edification, or more plainly, of preaching, would have intervened to prevent his not less characteristic gloominess from having the whole field to itself.

Again, "Rasselas" is much less than is "Candide" a squib on a system of philosophy. The only clear reference of this kind in Johnson's work is that made in Chapter XXII., "On the happiness of a life led according to nature."[1] But, of course, even in the case of "Candide," the satire is aimed not so much at the Leibnitzian system as at the mere travesty of that system, which had come to be accepted as a substitute for it. All philosophical ideas admit of, and most such receive, a merely popular representation which easily becomes mistaken for the genuine article.

[1] See especially *ad finem*.

Every charlatan then makes use of "the system" as a means of explaining the mysteries of the Universe. Such pretended explanations very properly excite ridicule. Only let us remember that it is these *developments*, and not the speculations of which they are the spurious outcome, which were satirised by Voltaire, and in a less degree, by Johnson.

Strictly speaking, these and other like writers raise the question of the possibility of happiness not so much positively as rather negatively. The inquiry "Can happiness be found on earth?" as formulated in the XVIIIth century, meant for the most part, "Is there anywhere on earth an absence of the causes which produce *un*happiness?" In other words, "Is there any place discoverable in which there is no pain, oppression, fraud, crime, war, and bloodshed?"

At the present day, such merely negative happiness is not by the wisest of our teachers admitted as a legitimate object of human aspiration. At all events, it is held

that happiness understood in some more positive sense — viz. as consisting in the fulfilment either of duty, or of God's purposes concerning man, or of the moral order of the world — ought in *the first instance* to be proposed as an ideal, and only then ought the question of happiness, understood as consisting in immunity from life's troubles, to be mooted. That is to say, happiness in this latter sense ought at most to be annexed as a *condition* to happiness interpreted as = blessedness.

The XVIIIth century anti-cant writers, however, did not thus proceed. Not that the higher view of happiness was strange to them. On the contrary, they constantly, indeed usually, represent unhappiness as a consequence of unrighteousness, whilst they picture happiness as in some way or other dependent on virtue. Still, they drew no clear distinction between the moral and the material aspects of happiness. Their treatment of the whole question was in fact a merely popular one. They found

a shallow optimism or eudæmonism in undisputed possession of men's minds. This, to quote Boswell once more, they "refuted with brilliant success." But having done this, instead of shifting their position, they remained at the same point of view, though they were thus led not to optimism but to pessimism. An El Dorado was what they wanted, just as this was what their opponents wanted. The only difference was, that the fact of widespread human misery convinced them that there was no such thing as happiness anywhere.

It would be ridiculous, however, to make this misconception a reason for fault-finding. We are not to blame these writers merely because, whilst helping their contemporaries to get rid of cant, they did not at the same time start them on a new ethical scent. All that we mean is, that the starting-point of the investigation of happiness by Voltaire and Johnson must be clearly perceived, before its further course can be understood. Let us remember then what has been

already stated, viz. that "the question of the possibility of happiness was then raised not so much positively as rather negatively."

It may perhaps be thought, that as it was thus a negation from which these two writers started, therefore the satisfaction of their wants would be met by the enjoyment of a state of passionless repose. But though the absence of unhappiness was the object proposed, both writers agree in disclaiming the idea that a man can be called happy if his life is monotonously uniform, and if his days are spent in idleness and listlessness. "I would be glad to know," says the disreputable old woman in "Candide," "which is the worst, to be ravished a hundred times by negro pirates . . . to run the gauntlet among the Bulgarians, to be whipped and hanged at an *auto-da-fé*, to be dissected, to be chained to an oar in a galley; and in short, to experience all the miseries through which every one of us has passed, or

to remain here doing nothing?" "This," said Candide, "is a grand question. This discourse gave birth to new reflections, and Martin especially concluded that man was born to live in the convulsions of disquiet, or in the lethargy of idleness. Though Candide did not absolutely agree to this, yet he did not determine anything on this head." This is at the end of the first part of the story. But the question is decisively settled at the beginning of the second part. "We soon became tired of everything in life; riches fatigue the possessor; ambition when satisfied leaves only remorse behind it; the joys of love are but transient joys; and Candide, made to experience all the vicissitudes of fortune, was soon disgusted with cultivating his garden."[1]

More familiar, but to the same effect, is "The discontent of Rasselas in the Happy Valley"[2] and "The wants of him

[1] The late Professor Henry Morley's translation has been used for the English of the selections from "Candide."

[2] Chap. II.

that wants nothing."[1] "I can discover within me no power of perception which is not glutted with its proper pleasure, yet I do not feel myself delighted." "Possessing all that I want, I find one day and one hour exactly like another, except that the latter is still more tedious than the former."

This then being granted, the hopes of the youthful aspirant are naturally directed to the search for a state of things in which he will find happiness (or rather an absence of unhappiness) in active employment. Now, in order to show that happiness, as thus conceived, does not exist, it was scarcely possible for the authors of these fancy sketches not to derive their evidence from the current life of their own time. Accordingly, what they make their characters say on this point, takes the form of a criticism of contemporary civilisation. This is much more so in the case of "Candide" than in that of the companion volume, which latter usually avoids details

[1] Chap. III.

and confines itself to the statement of general principles.

Some of the particulars thus presented are of no small interest on historical grounds, as *e.g.* the account given of Paris, which is described as "a chaos, a confused multitude, where every one seeks for pleasure without being able to find it," and of the theatre and matters theatrical in that city, of the Jesuit fathers, who "wage war in this part of the world against the troops of Spain and Portugal, at the same time that they hear the confessions of those very princes in Europe, who kill Spaniards in America, and send them to heaven in Madrid"; of monks who "dispute, govern, intrigue, and burn people who are not of the same opinion as themselves"; of "Jansenists against Molinists, the Parliament against the Church, and one armed body of men against another"; of the English who "have expended much greater sums in the contest than all Canada is worth"; and finally, of the Westphalian Baron, with

his seventy-two quarterings, who refuses his sister in marriage to Candide because "he will never be reproached that his nephews are not qualified for the first ecclesiastical dignities in Germany," and who will not allow "his sister to be the wife of any person below the rank of a baron of the Empire."

But what in the present connection concerns us more than any of these historical references is, the position taken by these writers with regard to the question, How far does the pursuit of the objects which life offers lead to happiness?

More particularly, the spheres of activity into which life is divided being twofold, viz. intellectual and practical, this question means, What sort of happiness is that which is obtainable from the pursuit of the objects which belong to these two spheres respectively?

1. *The intellectual sphere.* Under this category, we may consider how human happiness is here made to appear (*a*) with

respect to knowledge, (*b*) with respect to art.

Starting, then, with (*a*), *i.e.* the pursuit of knowledge and the search after truth—the conception formed, alike by the French and by the English savant, is a disappointing one, or at least it would be so, if it were altogether serious. Serious it no doubt in both cases is, so far as regards the conclusion that these intellectual pursuits do not and cannot produce happiness. But the reasons for this belief, and the representations given of the claims of knowledge, are obviously such as the requirements of this "truth in tale" literature demanded, rather than criticisms of a more thorough-going kind.

Voltaire indeed contents himself with satirising the dulness, incompetence, vanity, egotism, maliciousness, prevalent in literary circles such as he knew them himself. "Who was that overgrown beast?" said Candide. "A very good-for-nothing sort of man, I assure you," answered the Abbé;

"one who gets his livelihood by abusing every new book and play that is written or performed. He abominates to see any one meet with success. . . . He is one of those vipers in literature who nourish themselves with their own venom; a pamphlet-monger." "A pamphlet-monger?" said Candide; "what is that?" "Why a pamphlet-monger," replied the Abbé, "is a writer of pamphlets, a fool." A supper-party composed of literary men is described, at which "several insipid jokes passed and repassed, with false reports, false reasonings, a little politics, and a great deal of scandal." The conversation then turned upon the new productions in literature. "Pray," said the Abbé, "good folks, have you seen the romance written by the Sieur Gauchat, doctor of divinity?" "Yes," answered one of the company, "but I had not patience to go through it. The town is pestered by a swarm of impertinent productions, but this of Dr. Gauchat's outdoes them all." Similarly, Archdeacon T. is described as "a

tedious creature who . . . tells one things that all the world knows . . . labours an argument . . . makes use of other people's wit . . . mangles what he has pilfered from them."

Or else, Voltaire finds (in the person of Signor Pococurante—a noble Venetian), that the most esteemed authors of the world do not please, and in this sense he passes under review Homer, Virgil, Horace, Tully, fourscore volumes of the Memoirs of the Academy of Sciences, a prodigious number of plays, English books (on these there is some qualified praise bestowed, though Milton is severely handled), and German poetry.

Other branches of knowledge are similarly ridiculed with a view to showing, if not their intrinsic worthlessness, yet at all events that of their professors. Thus "a northern sage at the Academy of Sciences at Bordeaux demonstrated by A plus B minus C, divided by Z, why the sheep must necessarily be red, and die of the mange."

"This concussion of the earth is no new thing," replied Pangloss; "the city of Lima in America experienced the same thing last year: the same cause, the same effect: there is certainly a train of sulphur all the way underground from Lima to Lisbon."

Of course, in estimating these and other like criticisms, we must remember that "Candide" is after all only a skit, just as the "Stultitiæ Laus" of Erasmus (which in some respects it resembles) is also only a skit. Still, we may regret, though we cannot be surprised, that the most eminent literary man of the XVIIIth century should have even poked fun at optimism, without so much as conveying by a hint his appreciation of knowledge if not as a source of happiness, yet at all events as an alleviation of misery.

In Johnson's "Rasselas" the conception of knowledge in relation to happiness is not, like Voltaire's, that of the satirist, but rather that of the moralist. In the first place, it is urged that "the proper study

of mankind is man." "My curiosity," said Rasselas, "does not very strongly lead me to survey piles of stone or mounds of earth. My business is with man." "What have I to do," said the Princess, "with the heroes or the monuments of ancient times —with times which can never return, and heroes whose form of life was different from all that the present condition of mankind requires or allows?"

In answer to this contention, the sage points out that the present depends on the past; "the present state of things is the consequence of the former . . . the most useful part of history is that which relates to the progress of the human mind, the gradual improvement of reason, the successful advances of science, the vicissitudes of learning and ignorance," &c.

These remarks are made in contemplation of a visit to the Pyramids. But at the conclusion of this visit, it appears pretty clearly, that the real use of such knowledge as that above described, is held

to be its applicability for purposes of reflection upon life from the moralist's point of view. "I consider this mighty structure as a monument of the insufficiency of human enjoyments. A king whose power is unlimited, and whose treasures surmount all real and imaginary wants, is compelled to solace, by the erection of a pyramid, the satiety of dominion and tastelessness of pleasures . . . Whoever thou art that, not content with a moderate condition, imaginest happiness in royal magnificence, and dreamest that command or riches can feed the appetite of novelty with perpetual gratifications, survey the Pyramids, and confess thy folly."

There is no more characteristically XVIIIth century conception of knowledge, than that which regards it as serving to point this melancholy moral. Though not an ignoble view, it is an extremely limited one, and indeed is usually combined in actual fact with a very considerable

indifference to knowledge except under its most immediately practical aspects.

In "Rasselas" also we are warned against the delusions — resulting in one-sidedness and even in monomania — to which the ardent pursuit of knowledge is apt to lead. These warnings occur in Chapter XL. ("The history of a man of learning") and in the four following chapters; so great is the importance which the author of the work ascribes to this danger! "The man of learning" (the reader need scarcely be reminded) is an astronomer, who has become so far infatuated by his studies, as to believe himself in possession of power to control the movements of the heavenly bodies. The recital of the astronomer's experiences suggests a discourse on "The dangerous Prevalence of Imagination."

Here Imlac runs amuck against "the love of solitude," "silent speculation," "visionary schemes," "feasting on luscious falsehood," "fictions beginning to operate

as realities," "false opinions fastening upon the mind," "life passing in dreams of rapture or of anguish," and much more to the same effect.

The whole passage is an exceedingly interesting one, not only in reference to our present subject, but also in reference to Johnson himself. The remarks made, moreover, considered in their bearings on the theory of madness (as expounded, for instance, in our own times by Dr. Maudsley), contain much practical wisdom. But undoubtedly the passage is intended also, to warn people against passing their time "in the attainment of sciences which can for the most part be but remotely useful to mankind." That is not really the lesson of the incident, but it is certainly one of the lessons drawn from it by the philosopher himself. Knowledge must not move far away from the contemplation of man's estate. That is assuredly what Johnson thought, and what he would have us think.

On the whole, then, Johnson entertained no very exalted conception of knowledge as an ingredient of happiness. Knowledge indeed, when it is thus confined and restricted, does not (nor in the case of Johnson or of his contemporaries did it) produce even relative happiness. Rather, by turning man's eyes in on himself, the pursuit of knowledge fails to cheer his heart or to lessen his melancholy.

Let us now pass to the second class of pursuits which are included under the intellectual sphere, viz. (*b*) the pursuit of Art.

This part of the subject may be treated briefly, since it fills no great space in either volume, whilst from one of them ("Rasselas") it is altogether absent.[1]

Here the same chapter of "Candide," from which extracts were previously made, must be laid under contribution again. Let it be understood, however, that neither in that former case nor in this one, do we

[1] Unless Chapter X.—one of the least effective parts of the story—can be considered as an exception.

maintain that Voltaire is necessarily expressing his own opinion. What we *do* interpret him to mean, in the case both of intellectual and artistic pursuits, is, that the disparaging opinions attributed to Signor Pococurante, illustrate the incapacity of knowledge and of art to satisfy man's desire for happiness. The world, whatever it *ought* to do, certainly does not, as a matter of fact, obtain what it wants from these sources. Look at Signor Pococurante!

"'Pray,' said Candide, 'by what master are the two first of these paintings?' 'They are Raphael's,' answered the senator. 'I gave a great deal of money for them seven years ago . . . but I cannot say they please me.'

"While dinner was getting ready, Pococurante ordered a concert. Candide praised the music to the skies. 'This noise,' said the noble Venetian, 'may amuse one for a little time, but if it was to last above half-an-hour, it would grow tiresome to

everybody, though perhaps no one would care to own it.'

"They went down into the garden, when Candide commended the several beauties that offered themselves to his view. 'I know nothing on earth laid out in such bad taste,' said Pococurante."

But it is time that we should attempt to convey an idea of the light in which (2) the *practical* sphere of life presents itself to these two writers.

In dealing with this side of the question, the chief difficulty is to do justice to the copiousness of the more or less pessimistic judgments pronounced. Speaking generally, "Candide" and "Rasselas" are distinguished in relation to this subject by the fact that the first lays more stress on man's cruelty, rapacity, and inhumanity; the second, on the illusiveness of the apparent pleasures of human life, even when its lot is comparatively tranquil and its circumstances such as by the majority of persons would be deemed enviable.

It would be difficult to find a more unrelieved picture of harshness and ferocity, cunning and treachery, indignity, outrage, injustice, and oppression, than that which is displayed in the pages of "Candide." The scene of these various horrors is shifted from one part of the globe to another, in order to show that no single part has a monopoly of them. The world thus appears, sometimes as a Pandemonium ("What demon or foe to mankind lords it thus tyrannically over the world?" asks Candide); sometimes as a madhouse ("To say exactly whether there are a greater number fit to be members of a madhouse in the one country or the other," *i.e.* England or France, "exceeds the limits of my imperfect capacity." So speaks Candide's companion, Martin).

It is not necessary to furnish details illustrative of this diseased state of mankind and of the world (for physical disasters and human crimes are lumped together in the general medley indiscriminately). What

seems to be more required is, that we would take note of some of the reflections to which the contemplation of this hell upon earth gives rise.

In the first place, is this evil plight of mankind a permanent necessity? The gloomiest of all answers to this question appears to be the only one of which, according to the teaching of this book, it is susceptible. "Do you think," said Candide, "that mankind always massacred each other as they do now? Were they always guilty of lies, fraud, treachery, ingratitude, inconstancy, envy, ambition, and cruelty? Were they always thieves, fools, cowards, gluttons, drunkards, misers, calumniators, debauchees, fanatics, and hypocrites?" "Do you believe," said Martin, "that hawks have always been accustomed to eat pigeons when they came in their way?" "Doubtless," said Candide. "Well, then," replied Martin, "if hawks have always had the same nature, why should you maintain that mankind change theirs?"

The notion that there is any superior Being interested in ameliorating man's distressed condition, receives scornful notice in the following terms: "My reverend father," says Candide to a famous dervish, who passed for the best philosopher in Turkey, "there is a horrible deal of evil on the earth." "What signifies it," says the dervish, "whether there is evil or good? When his highness sends a ship to Egypt, does he trouble his head whether the rats in the vessel are at their ease or not?" "What must then be done?" says Pangloss. "Be silent," answers the dervish.

Such then being the conclusion, what is its practical effect?

Well! the proper course to be pursued in order to secure *relative* happiness (*i.e.* the least possible amount of unhappiness under the circumstances), is to confine the sphere of life within narrow limits, and then to "work without disputing." "It is the only way to render life supportable." In other words, we must imitate the example

of the good old man, who "never knew the name of any mufti or vizier breathing," who "never inquired what is doing at Constantinople, but who was contented with sending thither the produce of his garden, which he cultivated with his own hands, his own labour and that of his children, keeping off from them three great evils—illness, vice, and want."

"Let us take care of our garden." Paraphrased, this means, "The world is a bad place to live in, let us keep as far away from it as we can, and mind our own business."

That this solution did not really satisfy the seekers after happiness, has been already seen. Has Voltaire then nothing beyond this to recommend? Is this his *ultima Thule* in this direction?

On this point it may be observed that, as we draw near the close of "Candide," *glimpses* of certain more positive conclusions make their appearance, at the same time that the design of the whole book as a protest against cant, rather than

as an independent expression of opinion, becomes increasingly clear.

The nature of the more positive conclusions above indicated may be illustrated as follows: (1) "We are all children of the same Divine Father who loves us, but who has not exempted us from the most callous sorrows, the most grievous maladies, an innumerable tribe of miseries that afflict the human race. What we call life is a compound of pleasure and pain. It is the passing away of a certain stated portion of time that . . . every one ought to employ in doing good to the community in which he is placed; in the enjoyment of the works of Providence, without idly seeking after hidden causes; in squaring his conduct by the rules of conscience; and above all, in showing a due respect to religion. Happy is he who can follow this unerringly.

(2) " . . . respect the impenetrable veil with which the Deity envelops his manner of operating upon us. It is perhaps

man who precipitates himself into the abyss of misfortunes, under which he groans. Of a frugivorous animal he has made himself a carnivorous one. The savages which we have seen eat only Jesuits, and do not live on bad terms among themselves. These savages, if there be one scattered here and there in the woods, only subsisting by acorns and herbs, are, without doubt, still more happy. Society has given birth to the greatest crimes." In this passage, Voltaire enunciates the favourite XVIIIth century theory (against which, however, Johnson's masculine mind rebelled) of the superiority of man in a state of nature.

(3) "Dear Cacambo! Adorable Zenoida!" cried Candide, "you efface from my heart the deep traces of my misfortunes. Love and friendship prepare for me future days of serenity and uninterrupted delights . . . everything is for the best in regard to me; all is good in nature." This goes rather beyond the passage about the cultivation

of the garden, since it brings into prominence the importance of social, and especially of domestic, relationships, as helping man to the recovery of that state of nature from which he has lapsed.

In "Rasselas," as has been already remarked, Human Nature is not contemplated as a seething mass of iniquity, or as a prey to the direst ills capable of being conceived. Rather, what here appears is, that the experience of life everywhere disappoints its promise. There are no real pleasures to be enjoyed either in solitude or in society. The gaiety of dissipation, the life of a hermit, the position of persons placed in high stations, not less than that of those who spend their days in pastoral seclusion, these are all alike unsatisfying, whilst in some cases they become unendurable.

That under these circumstances man is not capable of improvement, and that his chances of happiness may not be multiplied, we do not find stated, nor perhaps

did the English moralist go to this length. At the same time, in "Rasselas" there does not appear to be much hope entertained of any very great results being thus brought to pass. Thus, the redistribution of property is seen to be ineffectual as a factor of happiness, on the ground that though "there may be community of material possessions, there can never be community of love or of esteem. It must happen that one will please more than another; he that knows himself despised will always be envious." And later on in the book (in a passage already referred to) the Prince confesses "an indulgence of fantastic delight. . . . I have frequently endeavoured to imagine the possibility of a perfect government, by which all wrong should be restrained, all vice reformed, and all the subjects preserved in tranquillity and innocence" . . . "Such," said Imlac, "are the effects of visionary schemes."

Moreover, in addition to these and other like remarks (which, of course, do not

preclude useful and beneficent undertakings in the interests of human welfare), the doctrine of "Rasselas" (deeply rooted in its author—*vide* Boswell—Dr. Hill's edition, ii. 22, *note*) is to the effect, that man's power of forecasting the future is so narrowly limited, that he has "no other rule for choice than to remove from all apparent evil." This doctrine applies both to the state and to the individual, though the quotation given is actually applied only to the latter. At all events, the possibilities of progress by the initiation of social and political reforms do not, in the Johnsonian view, extend very far.

On the subject of what we have called *relative* happiness, "Rasselas" is exceptionally strong. The phrase has indeed, in this case, a special appropriateness, since the relation of things to each other and to their attendant circumstances, was Johnson's favourite theme. From this point of view, he here discusses the advantages of matrimony as compared with celibacy, of

early as compared with late marriages, of the monastic as compared with the secular life, his usual method being to decide in favour of some given course as intrinsically preferable, whilst at the same time admitting that there may sometimes be reasons for preferring the alternative. The discussions are carried on in the spirit of the familiar table-talk, which they reproduce in a more polished form. They have a good healthy ring about them, and lend no countenance either to an affected or to an exaggerated insistance on the extent of human wretchedness. "Dear Princess," said Rasselas, "you fall into the common errors of exaggeratory declamation by producing . . . examples of national calamities which are found in books, rather than in the world, and which, as they are horrid, are ordained to be rare. Let us not imagine evils which we do not feel, nor injure life by misrepresentations. . . . While courts are disturbed with intestine competitions, and ambassadors are negotiating in foreign countries,

the smith still plies his anvil, and the husbandman drives his plough forward; the necessaries of life are required and obtained, and the successive business of the season continues to make its wonted revolutions." (Note that here we meet with the same trend of thought which we saw followed in "Candide." In both cases, comfort is obtained by fixing attention on the realities of life under its domestic and work-a-day aspects, rather than by engagement with the affairs of the world in a more ambitious sense.)

And what a depth of tenderness and of human sympathy there is in the melancholy of "Rasselas"! Its sorrows spring from the heart of mankind, and are such as make themselves felt always and everywhere; *e.g.* "Praise," said the Sage with a sigh, "is to an old man an empty sound. I have neither mother to be delighted with the reputation of her son, nor wife to partake the honours of her husband. I have outlived my friends and my rivals. Nothing is

now of much importance; for I cannot extend my interest beyond myself. Youth is delighted with applause, because it is considered as the earnest of some future good, and because the prospect of life is far extended; but to me, who am now declining to decrepitude, there is little to be feared from the malevolence of men, and yet less to be hoped from their affection or esteem. Something they may take away, but they can give me nothing."

But the sense of man's misery which finds expression in "Rasselas" is but the other side of its author's "larger hope." The latter is not obtruded and indeed is very seldom allowed to appear. Explicitly, it is not more than twice mentioned, and even then the language in which it finds utterance, restricts itself to the most general statements. But this sober and restrained character attaching to the words used, renders them all the more weighty, especially in a composition of this kind. It would have been easy for Johnson to have

improved the occasion by the employment of "words in season" more confident and cocksure as well as more specifically Christian. Not such, however, was the course taken. Man's present unhappiness was far too awful a subject to be utilised by a writer of Johnson's sincerity as a mere foil to the state of bliss provided, by way of compensation, in a future life. What "Rasselas" has to say about "eternal hope" amounts, in the first place, to an expression of belief that, in spite of darkness, bewilderment, and tears, man can never really be punished by God for doing his duty. "When we act according to our duty, we commit the events to Him by whose laws our actions are governed, and who will suffer none to be finally punished for obedience."

The other religious conviction proclaimed in this volume is that, not indeed of the *immortality* of the soul (since "the Being which made the soul can destroy it"), but rather that which springs from "humbly learning that the soul will not be annihilated

by Him that made it." "This," says Imlac, "must be learnt from 'a higher authority' than that of philosophy."

And then Rasselas continues and concludes (as also we must conclude), by reciting what he regards as the main lesson suggested by a visit to the Pyramids. "How gloomy would be these mansions of the dead to him who did not know that he should never die; that what now acts shall continue its agency, and what now thinks shall think on for ever. Those that lie here stretched before us, the wise and the powerful of ancient times, warn us to remember the shortness of our present state; they were perhaps snatched away while they were busy, like us, in the 'choice of life.'"

"To me," said the Princess, "the choice of life is become less important; I hope hereafter to think only on the choice of eternity."

VI

PSEUDO-ORIENTALISM

"LETTRES PERSANES"
By Montesquieu (1721)

"CITIZEN OF THE WORLD"
By Oliver Goldsmith (1760)

VI

THE class of literature which we shall next attempt to represent, is that which criticises European society from a cosmopolitan, or rather from a pseudo-oriental, point of view.

The attempt to invest these criticisms with an Eastern character would have to be pronounced a failure, if there were any reason to believe that it was seriously made. There is, however, no such reason, though Montesquieu's description of court and harem life in Persia is vividly drawn. The disguise in which these critics appear can only be regarded as a literary artifice, and is indeed too transparently unreal to produce any other impression.

Yet though realistic verisimilitude was neither achieved nor seriously attempted

by these writers, the orientalism which they affected served a very definite purpose. It did so, in the first place, on the merely subordinate ground that it was at that time extremely fashionable, and contributed therefore to the success of those authors who knew how to avail themselves of it. We have indeed quite sufficient evidence in the *Lettres Persanes* and the *Citizen of the World* (to go no further) of the attraction exercised by Asia upon Europe during the XVIIIth century. Alike the Persian, in the one case, and the Chinaman, in the other, are exhibited as meeting with Europeans who claim to know more of Persia and China respectively than they know themselves.[1] Nor are "Persian Tales" more appreciated by the French court lady,[2] than are Chinese ornaments by the English "Lady of distinction."[3] "The English are . . . generally pleased with everything that comes from China. . . . They have

[1] *Lettres Persanes*, LXXII.; *Citizen*, XXXIII.
[2] *Lettres Persanes*, CXII. [3] *Citizen*, XIV.

filled their houses with our furniture, their public gardens with our fireworks, and their very ponds with our fish." [1]

It was not, however, merely in order to secure popularity for their writings, that Montesquieu and Goldsmith clothed them in an Eastern garb. Their object was to place themselves, as far as possible, in the position of detached observers, and for that purpose these oriental accessories afforded them an invaluable scaffolding from which to make their survey. The expedient was one which in fact just satisfied their requirements. For whilst, on the one hand, they had no thought of judging the morals and manners of Western Europe by reference to an ideal standard, they were yet, on the other hand, anxious to escape from the necessity of shaping their criticisms in accordance with conventional demands. Moreover, they were both of them (Montesquieu especially) lovers of paradox, and no better excuse for the statement of

[1] Letter CX.

paradoxical opinions could possibly have been devised than that of attributing them to an imaginary Persian or Chinaman. Voltaire has given it as his opinion, that if Montesquieu had been speaking in his own person, he would not always have ventured to express himself as he has done when speaking in his character as a Persian,[1] and this seems highly probable. In any case, the pseudo-oriental method of criticism is full of piquancy, though it of course suffers owing to its having lost the novelty which it did not altogether possess even a hundred and eighty years ago.

The *Citizen of the World* was obviously suggested by the *Lettres Persanes*. The later volume, however, resembles the earlier one chiefly in the merely general sense

[1] "Il risque souvent, pour s'égayer avec le lecteur, ce qu'il n'aurait peut-être pas risqué en son propre nom. Lui même a soin de nous en avertir, lorsqu'il fait dire à son philosophe persan qu'il a pris le gôut du pays où il est (la France), où l'on aime à soutenir des opinions extraordinaires, et à reduire tout en paradoxes."

that, like its predecessor, it is a series of letters written by an Eastern traveller who is engaged in studying European civilisation. Also, the *subjects* of the criticisms made are, to a certain extent, the same in both cases. But even when they are so, what Goldsmith has to say on them is almost entirely his own. Goldsmith indeed was not only a most original writer, but his originality found in this species of composition a most congenial mode of expression. He was not likely therefore to borrow largely from Montesquieu, who besides was a man of a wholly different order of intelligence.

It was, however, of course inevitable that certain things in the XVIIIth century should present themselves to two independent observers in the same light. Thus, both Montesquieu and Goldsmith revolted (as did also Voltaire) against the contemporary manner of conducting funerals,[1] they both of them condemned the

[1] *Lettres Persanes*, XL.; *Citizen*, XII. and XCVI.

severity of the contemporary penal laws,[1] and they were both of them scandalised by the extravagance and outrageousness of the contemporary fashions in dress.[2]

Both works were the means of first securing for their authors a literary reputation. On the other hand, they are both of them to be looked upon, in a certain sense, merely as studies preparatory to the production of *chefs d'œuvre*. For the *Lettres Persanes* furnish only a bare outline of the teaching of the *Esprit des Lois*, whilst the character-sketches of the *Citizen of the World* do not attain to the perfection of those with which we are familiar in the "Vicar of Wakefield." Hence, if it were merely a question of indicating and illustrating the best work done by these two authors, we should not have recourse to either of these two volumes of letters, though neither of them now receives, and one of them (the *Citizen of the World*)

[1] *Lettres Persanes*, LXXXI; *Citizen*, LXXX.
[2] *Lettres Persanes*, C.; *Citizen*, LXXXI.

perhaps never has received, its due share of appreciation.

But for the purpose of our present discussion—which is to form an idea of the "good man" of the XVIIIth century from a cosmopolitan point of view—we cannot do better than to confine ourselves to the *Lettres Persanes* and the *Citizen of the World*, the one of which was published in 1721, the other in 1760.

The former work is, in the first instance, a satire on XVIIIth century society. The satire is delicate and refined rather than scathing; it neither deals knock-down blows nor inflicts poisonous wounds. The fact that Montesquieu was received into the French Academy, which he had previously ridiculed in these letters, is significant of their general effect, which was not such as to arouse profound or lasting resentment.

In the earlier part of the volume, there is an abundance of personal satire. Instances in point are, Letter XLVIII.,

which consists in a series of lampoons on certain typical representatives of Parisian society; Letter LII., on middle-aged and old women attempting to appear young; Letter LVII., on confessors and casuists; Letter LVIII., on charlatans and quacks; Letter LIX., on *Laudatores temporis acti.*

But in this field, Montesquieu has been surpassed by many other satirists, notably by our own Goldsmith. He had none of the latter's insight into individual foibles (Beau Tibbs, for example, in Letters LIV. and LV. of the *Citizen* would have been quite beyond him). The fact is, that Montesquieu was a man who did not really care for anything about persons, so much as he cared for tendencies, principles, institutions, culture, the condition of society and of states and nations. Now a satirist cannot but be placed to some extent at a disadvantage who is thus situated.

On the other hand, his employment of oriental illustrations is more quaintly humorous than is that of Goldsmith. A

further compensation is, that even towards classes of men whom he disliked and whom for the most part he chastises, Montesquieu was not altogether wanting in sympathy. Thus, few writers have ever shown a juster appreciation of the difficulties of the clergy in reference to the laity, than that which we find exemplified in Letter LXI.[1] *Per contra*, his treatment of individuals is sometimes not a little one-sided, as may be seen if only from his hyperbolical characterisation of Louis XIV. in Letter XXXVII.

But we have in the *Lettres Persanes*, not only a satire on XVIIIth century society, but also an anticipatory sketch of the tendencies of XVIIIth century thought. It would be difficult indeed to find any book which breathes the spirit of the age in which it was produced to the same extent. The points discussed or referred to relate to such questions as: the origin and growth of society; the significance of

[1] *Cf.* also Letter CXXVII.

luxury; the relations of the sexes; matrimony; the value of religious toleration; Christianity and other religions; war; suicide; the variations of population; the basis of Civil and of International Law—all of them questions which recur again and again throughout XVIIIth century speculation.

Enough has now been said in order to prepare the way for the more particular inquiry upon which we are engaged. Of course we should look in vain, if we attempted to discover in these letters the *character* of a "good man," either cosmopolitan or otherwise. But if our object is, to ascertain the standpoint from which in the XVIIIth century a "good man" of this cosmopolitan kind was conceived, we shall find plenty of materials available for this purpose in the *Lettres Persanes*.

The root principle then of this "good man's" view of life is his belief in the supremacy of the moral law. For the French word *justice*, as understood in

Letter LXXXIV., means really the *principle* of justice, *i.e.* righteousness.[1] This principle of justice is spoken of as divine and eternal, and is, for practical purposes, identified by Montesquieu with the idea of God. Here is what he says on this subject: "If there is a God, He must necessarily be just, for if He were not so, He would be the worst and most degraded of all existences. This justice consists in an objective relationship of mutual fitness between two things. The relationship is always the same, no matter whether it is to the eye of God, or of an angel, or

[1] "The Latin- and Romance-speaking peoples have but a single word for 'justice' and for righteousness. The almost inevitable consequence is to lose sight of the larger meaning in the smaller" (Professor Sanday in the *Journal of Theological Studies* for July 1900). In the passage from Letter LXXXIV., translated in the above paragraph, the tendency seems to be in this direction. For at the outset of that passage the chief if not sole reference is to justice, in the objective sense of that term, whilst the passage closes by recognising justice on its moral side as = *equité*. The latter, *i.e.* the *sense* of justice, is really as necessary as is the former to Montesquieu's conclusion.

of a human being, that it presents itself. It is true that men often do not see wherein the relationship consists. Often too, even when they do see it, they turn away from it. . . . Justice raises her voice, but it is with difficulty that amidst the tumult of passions she makes herself heard.

"Men are of course liable to commit acts of injustice. They do so, because it serves their interest, and because they prefer to gratify themselves rather than other people. It is always because they take count of themselves that they thus behave. There is no such thing as a wrong-doer without a motive. There must be a reason which determines men's actions, and this reason always proceeds from self-interest.

"God, however, cannot possibly do anything that is unjust. Granting that He has a sense of justice, He must necessarily give effect to it. For seeing that He has need of nothing, and is self-sufficing, He would be the most evil of all evil-doers, inasmuch

as He would transgress without having any interest in doing so.

"Hence, even if there were no God, we should be under a continual obligation to love justice: *i.e.* to do our best to become more like Him of whom we have such an exalted idea, and who, if He was a real being, would necessarily be a righteous being. Though then no longer bound by the restraints of religion, we should have no right not to be bound by those of equity."[1]

Montesquieu thus argues in favour of the underivative supremacy of the moral law in human nature, as against the view which ascribes the origin of morality and justice to a convention entered into between human beings. It would indeed have been disastrous, he remarks (in terms which to a present-day reader may seem prelusive of Mr. Benjamin Kidd's "Social Evolution"), if there had not been this "inward principle" influencing the strong in favour

[1] Letter LXXXIV.

of the weak. The security of the latter depends not on any convention or contract, but on the blessed fact that there is in the hearts of all men an inherent sense of justice. "But for this, we should be in a continual state of alarm; we should move about amongst men as if we were in the presence of lions, and we should never for a moment feel assured of our lives, our property, or our honour."

Though, however, Montesquieu thus maintains the supremacy of the moral principle in the world both of nature and of human life, he does not understand the assertion of this axiomatic truth as equivalent to a solution of all the difficulties suggested by the contemplation of human affairs. Still less does he propose to himself anything in the shape of a *Théodicée*. His main interest (as has been already explained) centred on states and nations; the law of righteousness presents itself to him in connection with communities rather than with individuals. But it was no

part of his aim even in regard to communities, "to justify the ways of God to man," or to construct a synthesis of history having this for its object. His view of God is not that of a theologian but of a philosopher, and especially it is the view of a political philosopher.

Rather, the fundamental position (as above determined) is here further developed as follows. The "good man" will in the first place long after, and endeavour to realise, a state of things in which the rule of law prevails over that of arbitrary caprice. Therefore, he will be a lover of constitutional government, of just administration,[1] of punishments neither too lax nor too severe,[2] and of

[1] Letters CIII. and CIV. Montesquieu did not visit England until five years after the publication of the *Lettres Persanes*. His political preferences, therefore, as expressed in these letters, were not due to his admiration of the English, whom he here represents as not estimating highly enough the virtues of submission and obedience, and as holding questionable views with regard to their own constitutional obligations (Letter CV.).

[2] Letters LXXXI. and XCVI.

scientific jurisprudence.[1] In this connection, the contrast between East and West is utilised with admirable effect. "The power of the sovereigns of Europe is very considerable; indeed it may be said that what they possess in this way is what they desire. But the extent to which they exercise this power is by no means what it is with our sultans, the reason being, in the first place, that they have no wish to outrage the manners and religion of their subjects, and, secondly, that it is not to their interest to carry matters to such extreme lengths."[2]

But further, the law of righteousness or, more correctly, righteousness as law, must enter into the relations of States with each other, and must likewise regulate the conduct of each State in reference to its own citizens. Montesquieu's speculations on International Law fall under the first

[1] Letters LXVIII. and CI.

[2] Letter CIII., and much more to the same effect both in this and the following letter.

head, those on Liberty and Equality and on Religious Toleration, under the second. The ideas maintained in respect to both these branches of inquiry were, of course, worked out by their author in much greater detail subsequently. What he here says about them is of interest chiefly, as showing his sense of the importance of such considerations from a political, and perhaps still more from an ethical, point of view.

(1) *International Law.* These two points of view are indeed to a great extent identified, when it is urged[1] that International Law is to be regarded as affecting States after precisely the same manner in which the Civil Law affects individuals. "It is said that there are two quite different kinds of justice, the one of which regulates men's private affairs, and which obtains in the Civil Law; the other of which regulates the questions which arise between nations and which is dominant in International Law; just as if this latter was

[1] Letters XCV. and XCVI.

not itself Civil Law, a part *i.e.* of the civil law, not indeed of any particular country, but of the world!"[1]

This analogy is, in the following chapter, explained and illustrated. Thus, with regard to the right of one State to make war upon another, we are told that this right is neither more nor less than that of a private citizen to defend himself in the event of *his* being attacked, or to defend his neighbours, in the event of *their* being attacked. The resort to force is not for any other reason legitimate, in the case either of the individual or of the State. And just as in private life there may be hostile measures taken of reprisal, of exclusion from privileges, of renunciation of intimacy, without any personal attack being made on the offending person or party, so when nations are concerned, the supreme arbitrament of war is only to be employed where nothing else but the *destruction* of the enemy can compensate for the injury

[1] Letter XCV.

done by him, there being, in this case likewise, a possibility of making reprisals, of excluding others from advantages previously enjoyed by them, and of renouncing their alliance.

We have no concern here either with the merits of these doctrines, or with their historical antecedents. They are referred to simply as instances of the extension of the "good man's" morality (or of what we have called his "law of righteousness"), so as to make it cover not only the moral, but also the political, sphere of action.

We have the same purpose in view when we refer (2) to the teaching of these letters on the subject of *Liberty and Equality* and of *Religious Toleration.*

Montesquieu (to whom the device of "Liberty and Equality" seems originally to have been due[1]) praises, as the best form of government, that one "which secures its

[1] *Cf.* Bodley's "France," vol. i. p. 202, "Fraternity alone of the three national virtues owes its legend entirely to the Revolution."

ends with the least effort." Hence, that one will be "nearest to perfection which rules over men in the manner which is most agreeable to their leanings and inclinations."[1] The *liberty* thus conceded increases men's love of the State, by making them feel that they are themselves a part of it and that it belongs to themselves. Its glory becomes their own, and owing to their being possessed by this feeling, they will do for the State voluntarily, what not all the arbitrary rewards and punishments of despotic rulers would induce them to do by bribery and menaces.[2]

Political liberty is thus recommended, because it is only by means of such liberty that the individual can associate himself morally with the government of the State. No doubt it is self-interest of the material, *as well* as of the moral, kind which thus operates.[3] None the less, the "good man" desires that he may be politically free, in order that he may

[1] Letter LXXXI. [2] Letter XC. [3] Letter CXXIII.

attain to the possession of higher moral privileges, or, in other words, that he may better realise righteousness as a law.

In Letter CXXIII., the advantages of *Equality* are maintained on very much the same grounds, though in this case, it must be admitted, the ethical point of view is to some extent subordinated to motives of self-interest as more ordinarily understood.

Lastly, *Religious Toleration*. The "good man's" conviction on this point springs, partly from his sense of "the inhumanity of inflicting burdens on men's consciences," partly from his belief that the coexistence of a multiplicity of religions is helpful rather than injurious,[1] partly again from the constantly repeated spectacle of the horrors produced by *in*tolerance.[2] The ideal state of things, according to our "good man," would perhaps be that which is desiderated in Letter XLVI. There, those

[1] Letter LXXXVI.

[2] *Histoire d'Apheridion et d'Astarte*, Letter LXVII.

who dispute about matters of religion are exhorted to remember, that "the surest way of pleasing the divinity is to conform to the demands of society and the duties of humanity." A moral regime, broad enough and binding enough to enable men to live together in peace and happiness, notwithstanding their differences of religious belief, such, it would appear, is the true solution of the difficulties arising out of that spirit of proselytism, which "originated with the Jews, and was by them derived from the Egyptians."

All these instances are intended to illustrate the "good man's" love of justice or righteousness. Yet is this veneration for morality and law not so much that of the mystic, as rather that of the would-be moral and legal reformer. It issues not so much in attempts to exhibit the embodiments which justice has already received, as rather in the employment of rational analysis, in order to make the approximation to ideal justice more

perfect. For Montesquieu's view is pre-eminently that of the "good man" *enlightened* by reason, nor is there any other view which is more characteristic of all that side of XVIIIth century speculation to which the term "enlightenment" was soon to be applied. That term was afterwards understood to imply pretty much what Montesquieu's "good man" has been shown to have possessed, viz.: lucidity; simplicity; humanitarianism; desire to restrict the powers of government; love of liberty and equality and of religious toleration.

Yet neither in our "good man's" case, nor in that of the *Aufklarung* more generally, did these tendencies of XVIIIth century enlightenment degenerate into *revolutionary* tendencies.[1] They did not do so in the former case, owing to Montesquieu's

[1] How little revolutionary Montesquieu was in the *political* sense, may be seen from Letter LXXIX.; *cp.* especially "Quelles que soient les lois, il faut toujours les suivre et les régarder comme la conscience publique, à laquelle celle des particuliers doit se conformer toujours."

sense of justice as founded and rooted in the very nature of things, and owing to his reasonableness as thence arising; they did not do so in the latter class of cases, owing to the operation of some analogous influence, as *e.g.* that of Natural Religion. And as we know (though with that fact we are not here concerned), Montesquieu became, as he advanced, more constitutional and less revolutionary, so much so, that he is to be regarded as the author of that French parliamentary system, for which, according to Mr. Bodley, France owes him no thanks.[1]

There are other points which deserve to be added to the picture of the "good man" as he is made to appear in these letters. Of these, however, only a very few can be here mentioned.

(1) *The "good man's" love of goodness.* "What a satisfaction for a man, on examining himself, to find that he is possessed by a sense of justice! By such a pleasure,

[1] "France," vol. ii. p. 246.

notwithstanding its seriousness, he must needs be enchanted. To be sensible of it is, to see oneself lifted as far above those who have no knowledge of it as one is lifted above tigers and bears. Yes! if I could be sure of never for a moment faltering in the pursuit of that goodness which I have before my eyes, I should deem myself the foremost man in the world."

(2) *The use of adversity.* "Adversity is less a chastisement than a warning. Precious indeed are the days which lead us to expiate our offences. The seasons which require to be shortened are rather those of our prosperity. What do all our impatient outcries serve to show, except that we desire to be happy independently of Him who bestows happiness because He is happiness itself?"

(3) *In praise of modesty.* "Approach, ye modest, that I may embrace you! You give to life its sweetness and its charm. You fancy that you possess nothing, and I tell you that you possess everything. You

think that you humble nobody, whereas you humble all the world. And when I compare you in my mind with those absolute persons whom I see on all sides of me, I hurl them headlong from their pedestal and deposit them at your feet."

As regards the "good man's" bearing in private life and in social intercourse, this seems to have been the virtue on which Montesquieu set the highest value, just as his *bête noire* was, ignorant, arrogant, egotistical self-assertion.[1]

(4) *Sympathy with distress.* "I confess that I have never seen any one shed tears without being touched. My sense of humanity towards the distressed is such that there might have been, except them, no other human beings. And even the great folk, though when they are raised aloft I find that my heart hardens towards them, the moment that they are fallen from their high estate, love them."

(5) *Cosmopolitan sympathy,* "The heart

[1] *Cf.* Letters L.–LIV., LXXII.–CXLIV., &c.

is a citizen of every country. . . . In whatever country I have been, I have lived in it just as if I had to pass my life there. And always I have experienced the same warmth of affection towards the virtuous, the same compassion or rather the same tenderness towards the distressed, the same respect for those whose prosperity has not blinded them. Such is my character. Wherever I find men, I make for myself friends."

Revelations of his own personal experience are not to be expected from a writer who was so much attracted by the spectacle of life as it is lived in the great world. Moreover, Montesquieu disliked the subjectivity ("que nous ne jugeons jamais des choses que par un rétour secret que nous faisons sur nousmêmes") which lends itself to such revelations. Still, the man himself is recognisable in this his first published work (*ætate* 32; likewise the age of Goldsmith when he published the *Citizen of the World*) as easily as is the epoch-making jurist in his more mature productions.

. . . . . .

The *Citizen of the World* consists of a series of fictitious letters, originally contributed to a weekly journal called the *Public Ledger*, and afterwards collected and reprinted in book form.

Such being the case, it would be absurd to regard this work as characterised by unity of design, and as intended by its author to give expression to opinions mutually co-ordinated and systematised. At the time that he wrote these letters, Goldsmith was a mere literary aspirant living from hand to mouth on his earnings (two letters a week at a guinea apiece), and the idea of a reduction of his views to fixed principles (with all that that implies) would not have been likely to have occurred to him, still less to have taken shape, under these circumstances. Needless to say, no such idea ever crossed his mind.

But the want of synthetic connection between its parts, is only injurious to a book when a coherent treatment is

demanded either by the nature of the subject-matter, or by the idiosyncrasy of the author. In the case before us, there was no demand for a treatment of this kind on either of the two grounds mentioned. Epistolary literature is necessarily more or less unsystematic, and owes no small part of its popularity to that fact. Nor did Goldsmith's genius, in order to do itself justice, require that his thoughts should follow a prescribed order, though no doubt he knew how to impart to his creations artistic unity of a higher type.

The "good man," in this case, is "tinctured with miscellaneous knowledge, and his manners are humanised by an intercourse with men."[1] "The chief business of his life has been to procure wisdom, and the chief object of that wisdom was to be happy. . . . Everything is calculated to increase the sphere of his happiness, not his curiosity . . . he is desirous of understanding the heart . . . leaves home

[1] Letter CVIII.

to mend himself and others . . . travelling has not more steeled his constitution against all the vicissitudes of climate and all the depressions of fatigue, than it has his mind against the accidents of fortune, or the accesses of despair."[1]

Such is that "traveller" whom in this work and in his most ambitious poem, indeed to some extent in all his writings, Goldsmith has so lovingly idealised. The conception of this character is, however, very little what the name seems to suggest. For the travelling referred to is in reality the journey through life; it does not *necessarily* imply any acquaintance with foreign lands, and not much even with the "traveller's" own native land. "'You have been a traveller then, I presume?' interrupted I. 'I cannot boast much of travelling,' continued he, 'for I have never left the parish in which I was born but three times in my life, that I can remember; but then there is not a street

[1] Letter VII.

in the whole neighbourhood that I have not lived in at some time or another.'"[1] Yet this cobbler is represented as having arrived at a view of his vocation in life, such as has not been arrived at in their own case by "European travellers," who "cross seas and deserts merely to measure the height of a mountain, to describe the cataract of a river, or tell the commodities which every country may produce."[2]

The "traveller," indeed, is so far from being a mere tourist, that he is sharply contrasted with this latter as being ex-hypothesi a "good man," and one who "grows wiser as well as better the farther that he departs from home," whilst the tourist "who goes from country to country, guided by the blind impulse of curiosity, is only a vagabond."[3] On the other hand, Goldsmith's "good man," in his capacity as traveller, is likewise strongly contrasted with the character of the "*recluse*," the

[1] "The History of a Philosophic Cobbler," Letter LXV.
[2] Letter VII. [3] Ibid.

man who fights shy of life and who accepts poverty and obscurity, without any real knowledge of what is thus involved. Then finding that these fancied sweets are really bitter, at the same time that "the world turns its back upon him, and gives him leave to act the philosopher in all the majesty of solitude," and not having "the satisfaction even of self-applause . . . he regards all mankind with detestation, and commencing man-hater, seeks solitude to be at liberty to rail."

"It has been said that he who retires to solitude, is either a beast or an angel. The censure is too severe, and the praise unmerited; the discontented being, who retires from society, is generally some good-natured man, who has begun life without experience, and knew not how to gain it in his intercourse with mankind."[1]

Clearly then the "good man's" travels through the world, are to be understood as meaning simply his acquisition of

[1] Letter LXVII.

experience, with a view at once to the furtherance of his own self-enlightenment, and the gratification of his human sympathies, (these two motives being in fact one). And not less clearly it appears, that the "good man" in question will conduct himself neither in the spirit of a mere novelty-hunter, nor yet in that of a mere "recluse."

But let us now inquire more particularly as regards the advantages intended to result from this diversified experience of the life of mankind.

Of these the *first* is, a juster appreciation of human nature and of the human race. What this means, may be seen perhaps best from Letter CXV., "On the Danger of having too high an Opinion of Human Nature."

"The most ignorant nations have always been found to think most highly of themselves. The Deity has ever been thought peculiarly concerned in their glory and preservation . . . examine a savage in the history of his country and predecessors;

you ever find his warriors able to conquer armies, and his sages acquainted with more than possible knowledge. . . . But whatever success this practice of making demigods might have been attended with in barbarous nations, I do not know that any man became a god in a country where the inhabitants were refined."

This point is not *mentioned* in connection with the advantages to be derived from a more extended experience of life, but a close study of the *Citizen of the World* will show that this was one of the results of experience on which its author set most store. The demigods and heroes raised aloft by mankind in the interests of its own self-love, no matter whether that self-love be personal, national, or sectional, these are one and all dethroned by the "traveller," the cosmopolitan truth-seeker, the enlightened inquirer.

This is really the gist of the many and various satirical sketches contained in the *Citizen of the World.* All men alike

belong to the human family, and those who seem not to do so by reason of their apparent elevation above the human level, are shown on examination to be just like the rest, and often to be even inferior when they fancied themselves superior. All alike are liable to human weakness, to ignorance and self-deception, to unreality and affectation, to ostentation and love of display. And the "traveller," inasmuch as he makes a study of life and learns to look below the surface of things, *sees* all this, and sees it ever more and more clearly in proportion as his experience widens and deepens.

There can be no better illustrations of this progress in knowledge than those furnished by Letter LXXIV. ("The Description of a Little Great Man") and Letter CIV. ("The Chinese Philosopher attempts to find out Famous Men") respectively. In the first we read, "I have reckoned up not less than twenty-five great men, seventeen very great men, and nine very extraordinary men, in less than the compass of half-a-year. . . . I

wonder how posterity will be able to remember them all, or whether the people, in future times, will have any business to mind but that of getting the catalogue by heart. Never did I enter a town which could not produce ten or twelve of these little great men, all fancying themselves known to the rest of the world, and complimenting each other upon their extensive reputation." . . . "The same idea of undeserved adulation that attends our great man while living, often also follows him to the tomb" . . . &c.

"For you and I, my friend, who have no humble admirer thus to attend us, we, who neither are, nor ever will be, great men, and who do not much care whether we are great men or no, at least let us strive to be honest men, and to have common sense."

In the second case referred to, the philosopher, after mixing with different classes of persons in the vain endeavour to obtain a true verdict as to who are "the truly great," adopts the expedient of "conversing with

men of real merit," in order to find out those characters which really deserve, though they strive to avoid, applause. I found the vulgar admiration entirely misplaced."

From the same point of view, he exposes the false pretensions of the members of "the Authors' Club,"[1] of "the English Nobility,"[2] of "Dr. Richard Rock (F U N) and Dr. Timothy Franks (F O G H),[3] and of "Men of Learning."[4]

This then is the *first* result which will accrue from increased familiarity with human life, provided of course that the "traveller" is a good and intelligent man.

But, *secondly*, the effect of this juster appreciation of human nature will not be, to produce contempt or to engender cynicism, but rather to draw closer the bond of sympathy which unites the "traveller" both to individual men and to mankind at large.

This consideration is really more crucial

[1] Letter XXIX. [2] Letter XXXIII.
[3] Letter LXVIII. [4] Letter CIV.

in reference to our "good man's" character than is the one already mentioned. It is also, not indeed more applicable, but more *distinctively* applicable, to Goldsmith himself.

For the correction of false estimates of men's claims, the reduction of all men to a common level having regard to their common humanity, this is in a sense the aim of all satire which is not simply and purely vindictive. What distinguishes satirists is, the *next* step that they take after this point has been reached. Does the conviction that men are "none good no not one" lead to wholesale depreciation, to unmeasured obloquy, to disbelief in virtue, in a word, to distrust of the whole human race? or does it lead to a more tender pity and a more heartfelt love? Goldsmith's "traveller" would not have been here exhibited as a "good man," unless his progress in knowledge had been followed, or rather accompanied, by progress in sympathy. As a matter of fact, however, the

sympathetic side of this author, and by consequence of his "traveller" or "good man," predominates to such an extent over his more critical and strictly satirical side, as for the latter to be almost lost sight of in the former, or rather, so as for it to find in the former its necessary supplement.

We may form some idea of the pity and tenderness induced by the "good man's" experience of life from the following instances.

(1) *His experience makes him love his friends better.* "If we become poor, we shall at least have the pleasure of bearing poverty together: for what is fatigue or famine when weighed against friendship and freedom?"[1]

(2) *His experience teaches him that even "an important trifler" (Beau Tibbs) is still a man and a brother.* "As I knew him to be a harmless amusing little thing, I could not return his smiles with any

[1] Letter XLVII.

degree of severity; so we walked forward on terms of the utmost intimacy."[1]

(3) *His experience teaches him not to be hard on the foibles of the great.* "The great have their foibles as well as the little. I am almost ashamed to mention it: let the foibles of the great rest in peace."[2]

(4) *His experience teaches him that life improves on acquaintance.* "The life of man is a journey. . . . If in the beginning it is found dangerous, narrow, and difficult, it must either grow better in the end, or we shall by custom learn to bear its inequality."[3]

(5) *His experience of life teaches him to love better his own home.* "Whatever vicissitudes we experience in life, however we toil, or wheresoever we wander, our fatigued wishes still recur to home for tranquillity: we long to die in that spot

[1] Letter LV. [2] Letter LXVIII.

[3] Letter XCV., and *cf.* on this point Letter LXXIII., one of the most beautiful of the whole series.

which gave us birth, and in that pleasing expectation opiate every calamity." [1]

(6) *His experience of men's woes causes him to exclaim against his own incapacity to relieve them.* "Why, why was I born a man, and yet see the sufferings of wretches I cannot relieve! . . . Why was this heart of mine formed with so much sensibility! or why was not my fortune adapted to its impulse! Tenderness, without a capacity of relieving, only makes the man who feels it more wretched than the object which sues for assistance." [2]

(7) *His experience specially inclines him to sympathise with the poor.* "The miseries of the poor are entirely disregarded; though some undergo more real hardships in one day than the great in their whole lives. It is indeed inconceivable what difficulties the meanest English

[1] Letter CIII. *Cp.* the well-known lines from "The Traveller"—

> "Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
> My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee."

[2] Letter CXVII.

sailor or soldier endures without murmuring or regret." [1]

As regards the two last of these quotations, the sympathy therein expressed is more profound and more passionate than it is in any of the previous cases. The remarks made on the condition of the English poor who are thus compassionated,[2] should be compared with the parallel passages of the *Lettres Persanes*, in which reference is made to the social and agrarian condition of France forty years earlier.[3] The historical questions suggested by this comparison, though of the utmost interest and importance, cannot be here discussed. It more concerns us to note, that whilst the "good man" of the French writer comments on the state of affairs which he describes in the spirit of a political philosopher keenly alive to the significance of contemporary

[1] Letter CXIX.
[2] Letters XCI., CXVII., CXIX.
[3] *Lettres Persanes*, CXXXII. and CXXXVIII.

movements,[1] the companion picture (that of Goldsmith *i.e.*) represents the "good man" as being affected solely by pity and anguish.

Though, however, the "citizen of the world" is a "good man" chiefly on account of his human-heartedness, and scarcely if at all on account of his bias in a technically political direction, he is yet not without certain political leanings. But even these proceed from his tender heart rather than from the more intellectual part of his constitution. Thus, his contemplation of the political history of Europe could lead him to no practical conclusions for the simple reason that it filled him with nothing but loathing. "On whatever side we regard the history of Europe, we shall perceive it to be a tissue of crimes, follies,

[1] The troubles which Montesquieu had particularly in view are those which arose out of the collapse of the credit system initiated by the Scotchman, John Law, Comptroller-General of the French finances, during the minority of Louis XV. (1718). The state of France more generally is, however, occasionally also referred to.

and misfortunes, of politics without design, and wars without consequence."[1]

The "citizen" is more reasonable in arguing against national ambition and aggressiveness.[2] His more general contention on this subject grows out of a topical reference to the Anglo-French war, *in re* the possession of Canada. This war is here (as often elsewhere in writings of the period) held up to odium as "a very destructive war," in which "they" (the English and French *i.e.*) "have already spilled much blood, are excessively irritated, and all upon account of one side's desiring to wear greater quantities of *fur* than the other."

But the discussion thus initiated, instead of being continued for the purpose of advocating a conciliatory and temperate policy on the part of the nations between whom there has arisen friction, soon develops into a denunciation of colonial expansion.[3]

[1] Letter XLII. [2] Letter XVII.

[3] Montesquieu had used similar arguments in Letter CXXII.

On this question Goldsmith felt strongly, as may be judged from his further discussion of it in Letter XXV. "The natural rise and decline of kingdoms exemplified in the 'History of the Kingdom of Lao'" reduces itself in effect to this single principle, that it is with all nations as it was with the inhabitants of Lao, who "had risen in strength by a love of their country, and fell by indulging ambition."[1]

The love of non-intervention and self-contraction which characterised so many *literary* politicians in the XVIIIth century, presents a curious appearance when it is remembered that, in the field of practical politics, the tendency towards foreign intervention and colonial expansion was,

[1] "Happy, very happy, might they have been, had they known when to bound their riches and their glory; had they known that extending empire is often diminishing power; that countries are ever strongest which are internally powerful; that colonies, by drafting away the brave and enterprising, leave the country in the hands of the timid and avaricious . . . that too much commerce may injure a nation as well as too little; and that there is a wide difference between a conquering and a flourishing empire."

during the greater part of the century, in the ascendant, as indeed the wars waged and the territories acquired are sufficient to prove.

But we are dispensed from the necessity of entering into an explanation on this point not only by its irrelevance to our subject in general, but also by the fact that, in the case of Goldsmith and his "good man," it is a point of quite secondary importance. What Goldsmith has to say on foreign and colonial matters, is indeed chiefly if not solely interesting, first, as an indication of his humane disposition, and secondly, as showing that he shared the views which largely prevailed at that time amongst literary men.

The only other constituent feature of these "letters" which seems to demand notice, is their writer's reliance on a sort of popular philosophy, by recourse to which the "good man" is represented as keeping himself within the bounds of moderation, and as avoiding both excess and defect

by an observance of the *juste milieu*. There is certainly quite enough of such talk scattered up and down through these pages. It is most of it in a strain which is characteristic of the age in which Goldsmith lived rather than of the man himself, as *e.g.* that mankind is "like a vessel sailing on a vast sea. Our prudence is its sails, the sciences serve us for oars, good or bad fortune are the favourable or contrary winds, and judgment is the rudder."[1] Recommendations conceived in this spirit are, in other cases, offered with a view to the furtherance of tranquillity of disposition. In this spirit, too, "the pursuit of wisdom" is treated allegorically in Letter XXXVII., and "religious sects in England" are unfavourably criticised in Letter CXI.

But a good deal of this is not Goldsmith, and much more of it is not of his best. And sometimes he corrects this way of thinking (or rather of trifling with

[1] Letter LXXXIII.

thought), by exposing, as in Letters LXI. and CIX., the fallacies which spring from it. Nor was any writer of his time less really in bondage than he was to the sentiments which, occasionally in these letters, he attributes to "Philosophy" or to a supposed "Philosopher."

Let us then think finally of him and of his "good man" *not* as thus limited, but rather as of the number of the "truly great," whom and whose critics he has described in the letter last cited.[1]

"The truly great, possesed of numerous small faults and shining virtues, preserve a sublime in morals as in writing. They who have attained an excellence in either, commit numberless transgressions, observable to the meanest understanding. The ignorant critic and dull remarker, can readily spy blemishes in eloquence or morals, whose sentiments are not sufficiently elevated to observe a beauty. But such are judges neither of books, nor of life; they can

[1] Letter CIX.

diminish no solid reputation by their censure nor bestow a lasting character by their applause. In short, I found by my search that such only can confer real fame upon others, who have merit themselves to deserve it."

VII

"ENLIGHTENMENT"

"PROFESSION DE FOI DU VICAIRE SAVOYARD" (PART OF "ÉMILE")

By J. J. Rousseau. Published 1764

"NATHAN DER WEISE"

By G. E. Lessing. Published 1779

VII

THE "good man," conceived as rationalist and religious free-thinker, is a peculiarly characteristic product of the XVIIIth century. Though such conceptions are primarily intellectual, their connection with ethics is by no means an arbitrary one. For the ascendency of the reason which they emphasise was not advocated for the purpose of exalting the intellect, but rather with a view to counteracting the extravagancies of one-sided tendencies. Thus, it was to be the office of reason to attempt a survey of man's moral and spiritual outlook, to correct what was erroneous in his religious views, and after having ascertained the residuum left over from this process, to insist on its importance as the common property of all good men.

The class of writers with whom we have now to do attempted to realise these general aims in reference to the then existing state of religious belief.

In this field the problem was, how to reconcile reason and revelation — a very different problem from that which now-a-days presents itself as regards the reconciliation of religion and science. By reason what people then meant was that which, late on in the century, Kant distinguished from reason as understanding. This was conceived as a concrete entity consisting of "ideas" acquired during the lifetime of the individual and capable of enumeration and definition. Locke's essay, indeed, contains a list of these ideas as thus analysed.

Now reason in this limited sense was neither by Locke himself, nor for the most part by his English disciples, regarded as inconsistent with revelation. The compactness, however, of this theory of knowledge, as likewise its seeming intelligibility, produced indirectly a disposition to recognise

its tests as the alone sufficient criteria of truth and falsehood. According to Bolingbroke's well-known dictum, "Every man's reason is every man's oracle." But if so, it could not but appear that the claims of revelation, if tenable at all, must admit of being thus tested. So strongly was this felt, that alike those who asserted and those who denied the truth of the Christian revelation, occupied the same position in so far as that both appealed to the same organ of authority — *i.e.* to what Carlyle calls "the logical, mensurative faculty as king over them." And in both cases the theory of knowledge adopted, either avowedly or implicitly, was that of the school of Locke.

But this dependence on the dominant philosophy of the period no doubt characterised to a peculiar and exceptional extent the unorthodoxy, and especially the *Deism*, of the XVIIIth century. Deism was, of course, recommended in that age on many other grounds besides that of its congruity

with the tenets of the English school of philosophy, nor were its chief exponents either in England or abroad for the most part philosophers in any technical sense. Still, it owed no small part of its plausibility (particularly in the eyes of its more enlightened advocates) to the at all events apparent discrepancy between a belief in the more direct participation of the Deity in human experience, and a theory of knowledge which treats human experience as automatically acquired. Some of the French encyclopædists, indeed, associated Deism directly with the Experimental Philosophy, both of these having been originally derived by them from English sources. But apart from any such direct connection, Deism obtained support not only because revealed religion was regarded as an effete superstition and as the creation of self-interested politicians, but also because the Deistic solution appeared to save all the more important interests of natural religion without involving any, even the slightest,

disturbance of the course of experience. Deism in short found favour not of course exclusively, but still largely, because it did not conflict with the then prevailing psychology.

Thus reason, *i.e.* the administrative organ of this resulting compound of individual experiences, came to be invested with an almost sacred character. It is necessary that this should be understood, since the glorification of reason in the abstract, far more than any historical or scientific evidence, was what, in the XVIIIth century, discredited the claims of revelation.

But besides that this helps us better to understand the revolt against orthodoxy, it helps us better also to understand how it was quite possible in that age for a good man to turn rationalist. The great European movement in philosophy and literature of the later XVIIIth and early XIXth century has, to some extent, incapacitated us from doing justice to the ideals of the preceding period. And

doubtless those ideals were limited and imperfect enough. Yet there was something healthy and beneficial in this reliance on the reason of the individual, something in it which represented the best that was possible under the circumstances in which it originated. For the forms of social and ecclesiastical membership had at that time become destitute of any real life. There was little in what men saw around them to quicken their faith or to foster in them a love of virtue for its own sake. In a world which displayed so few traces of any higher reason, there seemed to be nothing else for a man to do but to walk by the light of his own reason.

At the same time, recourse to this alternative was not likely to give rise to the production of typically "good men." It did not do so in theology or literature any more than in real life. The English Deists furnished no embodiment of this description. Shaftesbury's writings contain much matter which is of value for

incorporation into a theory of moral essentials, but, needless to say, we must not look to their easy-going, cynical author for a concrete impersonation of goodness Matthew Tindal, notwithstanding his endeavours, did not succeed in imparting to Deism an ethical character, much less in holding up before us the character of "a good man." The plant of which we are here in search appears in fact to have been incapable of being reared on a soil of this kind. Neither in its more highly educated, nor in its more vulgar, manifestations was Deism a *creative* influence. And least of all did it exhibit this character in the ethical sphere, though in that sphere, it ought, according to its own principles, to have achieved results which had not been, and which could not have been, achieved previously. Upon the explanation of this fact there is no need for us to dwell. Contemporary anti-deistical writers would have suggested the loose living of the deists as a cause, though

of this there was little proof. Others, both then and since, would account for the fact by reference to the inherent defects of Deism itself. All, however, that concerns *us* is the simple truth, that there is no typically illustrative specimen of moral goodness to be derived from this quarter.

When, however, Deism came to be transplanted to the continent, it in more than one way underwent a change. In some of these cases, it passed by a natural, and as some would say a logical, transition into Materialism. In others, it was retained as a religious doctrine, but without being connected with Locke's theory of knowledge. A third alternative was, to accept both the religious doctrine and the philosophical theory, but to subordinate both of these to an impulse of passionate conviction which, for want of a better name, we must call Sentimentalism. This was the position of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Finally, it might happen that Deism was either never held, or else

abandoned, but that notwithstanding this, something in common with it might characterise the line taken by a writer or thinker in *certain respects*. Thus Lessing was not strictly a deist at all, but nevertheless his attitude towards the historical revelation of Christianity was to some extent like that of the deists.

Now Deism was not unproductive of exemplars of goodness when, as in the two last of the above cases, it came to be allied with other influences more stimulating than itself. Though not in itself capable, nor even with the assistance of the philosophy most congenial to it capable, of serving as a formative agency, it might yet in such cases be employed as a negative background. This is how it in fact was employed in the *first* of the two character-sketches to which in this chapter we shall refer, viz. the "good man" as he appears in Rousseau's *Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard*.

In some of the earlier portions of this

statement of his beliefs the Vicaire argues in a spirit more like that of Kant than like that of Rousseau's master, Locke. This especially applies to what is urged as regards the activity of thought in relation to the deliverances of the senses. It is here laid down, though in merest outline, that what the senses convey has no meaning until it is interpreted by thought, that there must be something to which all sensations are relative in order for them to be cognisable as parts of experience, and that man is a rational and intelligent being precisely by virtue of his power of reducing his detached impressions to an ordered unity through the agency of thought. This certainty approximates—though of course only as a distant prophecy—to what Kant was soon to declare more explicitly as to the immanence in the ego of forms of intuition and thought presupposed by experience, and so far justifies T. H. Green's assertion that "the recognition of the constructive energy of reason, though but in abstract glimpses,

had forced itself on the introspective gaze of Rousseau," who therefore "was a heretic among the contemporary philosophers, yet contributed directly to the new birth of speculation that was gathering shape in the brain of the remote professor at Königsberg."[1]

Yet it is only fitfully and perhaps unconsciously that Rousseau's Vicaire thus makes his way towards principles such as those which afterwards became the presuppositions of the "Critical Philosophy." The feeling or sensibility which was what always prompted Rousseau both as man and as writer, and which is really only thought disguising itself under the form of an *ipse sensi*, enabled him in this case, as in so many others, to penetrate into regions which it was beyond his power further to explore. Merely, it is of interest to note that in the construction of an ideal portrait intended to illustrate the way to think rather than the way to live, the principles on which the construction proceeds,

[1] Nettleship's "Works of T. H. Green," vol. iii. p. 114.

are not in *all* respects such as one who is said to have been acquainted with no other philosophy but that of Locke, would have been expected to have approved.

When we pass from the "good man's" philosophical first principles to his views on the subject of Christian evidences, we find that the objections urged against a supernatural revelation are rationalistic. Yet it is the "good man's" goodness, not his intellect, which is said to revolt against the traditional forms. The appeal made is not to the dry light of reason, but to the common sense of the better part of mankind. The religious scruples entertained are practical rather than speculative, particular rather than general.

Nor is the scepticism of Rousseau's "good man" produced by negative solutions so much as by the despair of any solution. Needless to say, he was unacquainted with modern criticism, and only superficially acquainted with XVIIIth century rationalism. Nay, more; he seems on principle not to

have greatly troubled himself to apply the knowledge which was then accessible to the determination of his religious point of view. In his case, it was not merely that there were wanting many of the helps which are now available for the discussion of religious subjects, but, in one passage at any rate, he suggests that right thinking on such subjects is attainable without much, if any, technical knowledge of the matters relating to them being required.

"Consider, my friend," says Rousseau's idealised Vicaire, "what a horrible discussion was that in which I now came to be engaged! what immense erudition was required to enable me to make my way back to the most remote antiquity! to examine, weigh, confront, the prophecies, revelations, facts, as well as all the records, of religion in all the countries of the world! to assign to them their time, place, authorship, originating circumstances! What accuracy of criticism must be mine in order to distinguish between the genuine and spurious

writings! to compare the objections with the answers to them! the translations with their originals! to judge as to the impartiality of witnesses, their good sense, their qualifications! to satisfy myself that nothing has been suppressed, nothing added, nothing transposed, changed, falsified! to remove the contradictions which remain! to judge what weight the silence of adversaries ought to have in regard to the facts alleged against them; to decide whether these allegations were known to them and as to whether they thought them of sufficient importance for it to be worth while to make a reply to them! to ascertain whether books were widely circulated enough for those which we possess to have reached them; whether we have had honesty enough to give currency to their books amongst ourselves, and to allow the most forcible of their objections to remain just as they made them."

This highly rhetorical argument issues in a protest against the supposition that the

machinery of religious information stands in any necessary relation to religion. "It is absurd," says Rousseau's "good man" in effect, "to imagine that the truth about God is arrived at after any such fashion as this." In the first place, such testimony is throughout merely human; it is not knowledge of God at first hand. In the second place, this infinity of intellectual painstaking cannot have been required of man by God as a means of access to Himself. "What! Are we always to rely on these merely human evidences? Must it always be *men* who are to report to me what other men have reported to them? Is man thus to come between God and myself? Are we on every occasion to investigate, examine, compare, verify? Oh! if God had thought fit to excuse me from all this toil, should I have served Him any the less willingly?"

The position thus taken is further amplified at considerable length, but its meaning is made sufficiently clear in the passages above quoted. The "good man's" own

view, which is of course intimated long before it is explicitly announced, finds expression in such language as the following:—

"My son, keep your soul always in a state of desiring that there may be a God, and you will never doubt that there is one. Moreover, be the position which you adopt what it may, bear in mind that the real duties of religion are independent of human institutions; that an upright heart is the true temple of the Divinity; that in every country and in every sect the love of God above all else and of one's neighbour as oneself, is the sum of the law; that there is no religion anywhere which can dispense with the duties of morality; that there is nothing truly essential but these latter; that spiritual worship is the first of such duties, and that without faith no genuine virtue can exist."

Now one thing is quite evident from these citations, and indeed from the Vicaire's whole discourse, and that is, that though

Rationalism resulting in Deism is the creed of Rousseau's "good man," *i.e.* the *conclusion* at which he arrives, nothing can be less rationalistic than this statement of belief in so far as regards its spirit and manner. The animus of the discussion may even be said to be opposed to rationalism. For what Rousseau desires is, not knowledge of God conveyed mediately through intellectual and argumentative processes, but immediately through direct apprehension. He repudiates trains of reasoning; he is a sentimentalist, and sentimentalism far rather than rationalism is the leading characteristic of his religious attitude. This might be shown to be true also as regards his treatment of the specific doctrines of Christianity. But the point needs no labouring. Rousseau remains a deist, but his religion is essentially that of the heart. It is not indeed *Mysticism*, for there is in his experience no realised sense of the Divine presence, no reception of God, either ecstatic or meditative, into his

own soul. Rousseau's "good man" rather believes (subject to the requirements of Deism) that that must be which his heart desires should be—not mysticism then, but always and before everything else, *sentimentalism.*[1]

The point, however, most relevant to our present purpose is that, as in his view of the speculative groundwork of religion Rousseau's "good man" is not exclusively the product of XVIIIth century rationalism, so this applies also to his view as to the necessity of religion in a more positive sense. In the first case, he diverges somewhat from the school of Locke. In the second case, though he is to be regarded as an unimpeachable deist, his prevailing disposition is not that which is commonly associated with Deism.

. . . . . .

[1] "Sentimental," as here understood, really = sensitive. But there is *no* term which will express what "sentimental" means without suggesting any of the depreciatory associations with which that word has come to be connected since Carlyle denounced sentimentalism as "twin sister of cant."

Leaving Rousseau's *Vicaire*, let us now make a short study of Lessing's *Nathan*. In so doing, we find ourselves no doubt in a very different atmosphere of thought. At the same time, there is likeness as well as difference. We may perhaps even say that the contrast between these two compositions, by reason of the personal characteristics distinguishing their authors respectively, is not more marked than is the resemblance between them by reason of their common participation in the spirit of the XVIIIth century. It should be emphasised, however, that Rousseau is a mere child as compared with Lessing in respect to critical power and technical knowledge. Moreover, there is as regards at least one point (to be noticed later) an entire dissimilarity between them.

In his *Nathan* Lessing does not merely ventilate his own opinions, but aims also at the production of a work of art. The historical portraiture is the result of study, nor can the *personæ*

dramatis be understood without reference to the age in which they are represented to have lived and to the circumstances in which they are shown to have been placed. This fact has been too often either not observed or else ignored. "*Nathan* has been assumed to be a pronouncement against all revelation, a satire upon the Christian Religion." . . . "A dramatic poem is one thing, a theological treatise another. If this simple truth had been recognised, judgment of condemnation would not have been passed by theologians upon 'Nathan the Wise.' In dramatic art it is a primary law that the characters should have reality and individuality, not less in connection with their period than in respect to their behaviour. Such are the æsthetic conditions with which, from its very nature, a work of art must conform."

This general proposition is by Danzel and Guhrauer (from whose admirable account of "Lessing's Life and Works" the above extracts are quoted) elaborated in

detail. It is, for example, pointed out by them, that the specifically Christian characters of the play (illustrated, as it seems to them, most typically neither by the Patriarch nor by the Knight Templar, but by the lay-brother) are not intended, as has sometimes been supposed, to be disadvantageously compared with the Jewish and Mohammedan characters. Lessing himself, we are reminded, has adverted to the charge urged against him of having written with a view to the disparagement of Christianity, and has defended himself on the double ground, (1) that if he credits the Jews and Mohammedans with more learning than was possessed by the Christians at that epoch, this is only in accordance with the known facts; (2) that the age of the Crusades was one which more than any other in history would have struck a rational spectator as exemplifying the mischievous effects produced by revealed religions.

As regards these same "mischievous

effects," a passage is cited by Danzel and Guhrauer (Act ii. scene 5), in which, so far from being ascribed in any invidious sense to Christian influences, they are by the Knight Templar shown to have been due originally to the Jews, whose pride of exclusiveness was then transmitted to Christians and Mohammedans.

From these and from other similar indications it is abundantly evident, that *Nathan* is conceived from an historical point of view. It is no *mere* Tendenz-Schrift.

At the same time, it would be equally inaccurate to say that the play was not written with a distinct purpose, and to deny that it was inspired by a theological motive. A didactic aim is apparent throughout, nor can there be any doubt that Lessing wrote *Nathan* in order to give expression to his own views.

Thus, the well-known story of the Ring, narrated by Nathan in his colloquy with Saladin, depicts, under the form of a legend,

the philosopher's conviction that no one of the historical religions can claim exclusive possession of the truth—

> "The genuine ring, we must suppose, was lost,
> And, to conceal this loss and make it good,
> The father bid make three in place of one";

that when they attempt to do so, they necessarily become involved in mutual antagonisms—

> "The father being dead, forthwith each son
> Comes forward with his ring and claims to be
> The head of the house. There follow questionings
> And quarrels and complaints.
> "Each declared on oath
> He had the ring straight from his father's hand";

that they are in fact all of them no more than broken reflections of an ideal unity which God has not permitted to man to grasp in its completeness—

> "In vain! to know
> The true ring passed their wit—as ours, to know
> The true faith";

but which nevertheless every man may realise in his own life, and sufficiently for

his own purposes, by loving God above all things and his neighbour as himself. By means of adherence to these cardinal duties, all men of all creeds may both work out each his own salvation, and at the same time become united together amongst themselves;

> "That father's love, unprejudiced and pure,
> Let each essay to emulate, let each
> Strive to be first in showing forth the power
> That is hidden in the ring, calling it out
> By gentleness and hearty friendliness
> And kindly deeds and utter trust in God."

Finally, Lessing's view of the historical evidences of the Christian religion (indeed of all historical evidences in relation to any and every religion) is, in its results, the same as Rousseau's, though it rests upon a characteristically different ground. For Lessing's objection is not so much that the testimony is merely human, and therefore *ipso facto* incapable of substantiating its proofs, as rather that different religions make in this respect assertions which are

mutually incompatible, and which therefore, as they cannot all be true, must all be rejected as untenable, *i.e.* in any *exclusive* sense—

> "For are not all alike on history based,
> Traditional or written?
> How can I trust my forbears less than you
> Trust yours? or, take it the other way:
> Can I require that you should give the lie
> To your forefathers just to save my own?"

The "ring" episode, however, is not so easy to interpret as, from what has been said, may have appeared. Lessing's teaching, indeed, as thus illustrated, may be directed rather against the notion that there is any talismanic virtue inherent in the merely *external* profession of religious beliefs; the emphasis may lie chiefly, if not solely, on the requirement that faith (be it of what kind it may) should *evidence* its reality by works of love; the contrast suggested may be simply that between formal observances, on the one hand, and inwardness of conviction and earnestness of

life, on the other. This view would have the advantage of connecting the "ring" story, and indeed *Nathan* more generally, with the opinions expressed in other parts of Lessing's writings as regards the almost infinite possibilities thus far unrealised by Christianity, and which, by *becoming* realised, would exhibit it not merely as Christianity, but also as the religion of Christ and (in virtue of its correspondence with that character) as the true Gospel of salvation. It may even be meant that Christianity is both inherently fitted, and as a matter of fact destined, to prove its claims to supremacy in an altogether exceptional and unique manner.[1]

This indeed is *probably* the light in which Lessing's *Nathan* was desired by its author to be understood. For it must be remembered that the father, in the story, reserves until the final judgment his decision upon the question as to priority of claim to the possession of the truth.

[1] See Danzel and Guhrauer, *in loco.*

It is therefore by no means implied (though this has often been assumed) that, in Lessing's opinion, the religions of the world are all equally true, and that no one of them is better than any other or than all the rest. What *does* seem to be implied is (1) that the decision upon this point is reserved; (2) that superiority of merit is a thing to be *proved* by performance, and not a thing which attaches to the profession of any religion by prescriptive right; (3) that the comparative merit of religions will be tested by reference to ethical considerations; (4) that the religions of the world are united by ties of kinship (just as in the story, the claimants to the ring were brothers before they became rivals), and are therefore under an obligation to act towards each other in a spirit befitting the members of one and the same family.

Such teaching, though not orthodox, is neither that of a deist nor of a rationalist in the XVIIIth century sense of those terms. Nor, of course, was Lessing's conception of

the nature of God a deistic one.[1] No doubt, as regards the credibility of the Christian Revelation on its historical side, his view, though not exactly in agreement with Deism, was still less in agreement with Orthodoxy. As has been seen, however, *Nathan* was not written in order to establish anti-orthodox conclusions, nor is there much that points in this direction to be found in its pages. It was written chiefly, if not solely, with a view to moral edification. In this respect, it differs from Rousseau's *Vicaire*, the motive of which is, however, likewise far more practical than it is speculative. In other respects, there is not much divergence between the two works. In both of them, there is the same insistance on the extent of human ignorance; the same protest against exclusiveness; the same moralisation of religion; the same plea for mutual tolerance; the same desire to sink what are

[1] What Lessing thought on this subject, will be found well stated in Zeller's *Geschichte der Deutschen Philosophie* (pp. 365-370).

regarded as non-essentials and to exalt what are regarded as fundamentals. And as the tone of Rousseau's composition is such as to distinguish him from an ordinary XVIIIth century rationalist, so there is a like distinction in the case of Lessing, though arising from a different cause. For the teaching of the latter, though it contains some of the elements both of Deism and of rationalism, is yet, rightly understood, neither deistic nor rationalistic in so far as regards its primary aim.

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The question which we have now to consider is, how do the tenets of Rousseau and Lessing taken *together* throw light on the XVIIIth century ideal of the "good man," or rather, of the "wise man"?

Now in this as distinct from the other subjects of our study, it is the *doctrine* which is in question rather than its personification, the latter being employed not so much with a view to the presentation of a portrait as rather for didactic purposes.

The creation of a character is indeed, in the case of the *Vicaire*, not only not achieved, but is scarcely even so much as attempted.

What then is the aim of the personification in such cases?

The object (not, it is true, always apparent in the result) would seem to be that of divesting the opinions maintained of their doctrinaire character, and of imparting to them a semblance at any rate of conformity with the results of personal experience. It was a point of capital importance with these writers to exhibit their own utterances not *as* their own, but as proceeding from men at once competent to form a judgment, and, at the same time, not divorced in sympathy from the more enlightened sections of the general (as opposed to the merely professional) public. Thus, Rousseau's portrait is that of a dishonest priest whose private beliefs are totally at variance with his official professions and ministerial functions;

Lessing's, that of a philosopher who is also a merchant. In each of these cases, the representative spokesman is intended to reflect, not indeed popular opinion in the wide sense, but rather the mature convictions of men of "enlightenment."[1]

Thus considered, the purpose served by these creations was somewhat similar to that discharged in subsequent times by the hero of the religious novel. The latter, however, is of course much more elaborated in respect to colour and detail.

[1] The Vicaire no doubt *apparently* speaks to his supposed confidant as man to man, *e.g.* "I am but a man, and as such, ignorant and liable to error. . . . I have opened to you my heart without reserve; that of which I am certain I have represented as certain; I have placed my doubts before you *as* doubts, my opinions *as* opinions. I have given you my reasons both for my doubts and for my beliefs. It rests now with yourself to decide." At the same time, the *Profession de Foi*, though it thus makes its appeal to the human heart "without reserve," was meant to address itself only to those of Rousseau's contemporaries who were qualified for its appreciation by their rational enlightenment. What else is the significance of the fact that the *Vicaire* so scrupulously observes the forms (whilst privately dissenting from the credenda) of the Catholic Church?

Nathan similarly does not take all mankind into his confidence, but only the more enlightened classes. His point

That it is to be *preferred* because its outlines are thus more definitely filled in, cannot with justice be maintained. The exposition of a religious programme may

of view indeed is characterised by no small amount of intellectual hauteur. Witness the following :—

Saladin. Your name is Nathan?
Nathan. Yes.
Saladin. Nathan the Wise?
Nathan. No.
Saladin. You disclaim it, but it is the title
The people give you.
Nathan. Yes! may be the people.
Saladin. You cannot think I hold in light esteem
The people's voice. Long have I wished to know
The man to whom the people give that name.
Nathan. And what if it be given in jest? What if
"Wise" be to them no more than clever? and clever
No more than, "keen to see his own advantage"?
Saladin. You surely mean "to see his *true* advantage"?
Nathan. Then the most selfish were the cleverest,
Then clever and wise for certain were but one.
Saladin. You make a show of proving what you wish
To gainsay—yes! man's true advantage which
The people know not, that is known to you,
Or at the least you have essayed to know it,
Have deeply thought thereon and that's enough
To justify the title "wise."
Nathan. Which each
Thinks he deserves
Fancies his due.

sometimes with advantage be assigned to a fictitious character, provided that the character is allowed to remain general. But if *reality* of portraiture be attempted, there must necessarily be a failure either in the execution of this attempt, or else in the exposition of the programme. Not that a return to the XVIIIth century type of characterisation would, in the present age, be either possible or desirable. It is merely suggested that in its own day, that type answered perhaps better than another and more complex one has done in our day.

So far as regards the *form* in which these ideals are embodied. We come now to consider their matter.

The following quotation may help to show the direction in which we must look in order to form a true ethical appreciation of these attempts: "It was they" (*i.e.* the representatives of what is known as the *Aufklarung*, or Illumination, period) "who sought for the first time to give full force

to the peculiar value of the moral individual, in setting aside all conventional hindrances —a task for which very strong motives are offered in Christianity."[1]

The assertion of the moral character of the individual, is indeed by far the most valuable part of the benefit which has accrued from its presentation in the person of the "good" or "wise" man. It is true that virtue as thus presented is too sophisticated and self-conscious, nor is wisdom in all respects justified of her children either in the case of the sentimentalist Vicaire, or in that of the oracular Nathan, or in other similar cases. Yet it cannot be denied that these views and their representative embodiments, besides widening men's ideas at the time, have exercised a permanent, and in the main a salutary, influence on the progress of religious thought. Freedom of discussion in matters of religion was thus made to appear as

[1] Ritschl, "History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation" (English Translation by Black, vol. i. p. 344).

valuable not merely in the interests of truth, but also as an element in the formation of character.

But how are we to conceive of this same moral individual? For that which we so designate is after all only an abstraction, and it remains to be considered, therefore, whether it is with a mere abstraction that these authors are concerned. In order to become more than this, the "good man" would have to be exhibited, as finding in the society to which he belongs if not his own *alter ego*, yet at least something with which he can make terms. Nor can a religion of the heart, such as is here depicted, be realised immediately, and at first hand. Such a religion must necessarily be localised under some specific, even if not historical, form. Can we then say that this necessity is recognised by Rousseau and Lessing?

By Rousseau it appears *not* to have been recognised. No doubt, he lays stress on the fulfilment by the individual of his social obligations (*i.e.* of his duty towards his

neighbour). No doubt also, he is compelled to accept the practical necessity of differences of religious profession. But there is an absence in his religious, just as there is in his political, philosophy, of the conception of a society, relatively to which the individual becomes no longer an abstraction, but a reality. According to the doctrine which he held, positive religion (like the positive state in reference to natural right) was either a nuisance and a hindrance, or else, merely a means of re-establishing the individual in the possession of that which had all along belonged to him inherently.

In this respect, however, there is an essential difference between Rousseau and Lessing, and the marked contrast between them already referred to thus arises. Lessing's position on this subject is liable to escape notice for two reasons; one, that, like Rousseau, he is, both in his religious and in his political, teaching, an individualist; the other, that, also like Rousseau, he finds in positive religion, distinctively so called, a stumbling-

block. These undeniable data are then misinterpreted to mean that Lessing's individualism is mere atomism, and that his natural religion was intended by him, after having driven all positive religions out of the field, to take their place.

Now *Nathan* gives no real support to either of these views, though there are certain passages in it by which either or both of them may *seem* to be justified. But in order to show that these views are based on an entire misconception, it would be necessary to have recourse to the *Gespräche für Freimaurer*, a series of discussions devoted almost exclusively to the determination of the "natural" in reference to the "positive," though not confined to the treatment of this question under its religious aspects. These discussions (the character of which has sometimes been compared with that of the Platonic dialogues) are strictly germane to the thesis of *Nathan*, more so perhaps even than is *The Education of the Human Race*.

From them it appears, on the one hand, that Lessing's individualism is not self-centred, but exists only correlatively to a *regulative* principle of reason; on the other hand, that the element of difference is involved in the very essence of things, instead of being, as Rousseau thought, a mere distortion of the "natural" due to human perversity. The one State is not to be set over against the many forms of government and the diversity of political and social institutions, nor is the one religion to be regarded as inconsistent with varieties of belief and of ecclesiastical procedure. In both cases, the one and the many require and support each other, and it is only as thus mutually dependent, that either of them has any real existence.

It is not, however, necessary for us to attempt to unwind the coils of this dialectic further. For *Nathan*, though it contains much (for a drama, indeed, too much) that reminds us of the *Gespräche*, is yet neither in form nor in substance a dialectical composi-

tion. The *Gespräche* have been mentioned in connection with it, because its full purpose could not otherwise have been explained.

But we have had also a biographical reason for bringing these two works together, a reason which is full of significance as regards both Lessing and his "good man." For the spirit of calmness which characterises *Nathan* throughout, and which throughout, but especially towards the close of his life, characterised Lessing (he died two years after the play appeared), may not unreasonably be ascribed to the now culminating conviction which in the *Gespräche*, written not long before, had been thus expressed: "If Civil Society had in it no other good but this, that only where it exists can human reason be cultivated, I should give it my blessing, even though its ills were far greater than they are."

These words (a plain contradiction to Rousseau) contain as much perhaps in the way of consolation as at the time they were written (*i.e.* within little more than ten years of the

French Revolution) the facts seemed to justify. The sentiment may not to all persons convey as much comfort as it did to Lessing, but it is not unworthy of the "enlightenment" on its best side, or of the noblest of its sons.

There is just this one suggestion of a more general kind to be urged in conclusion. In the present age, we are not likely to forget those conditions of imperfect development which are sometimes too contemptuously spoken of as "XVIIIth century limitations." It is quite right that we should not forget them, and that we should observe how, notwithstanding his "enlightenment," the "good man" was subject to them. Yet from his moral disposition, his love of truth, the temper and tone of his mind, and the largeness of his outlook, we shall not fail, if we are wise, to derive both instruction and edification.

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